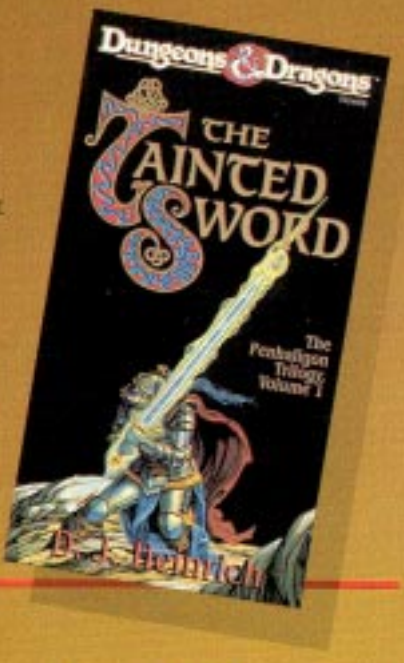

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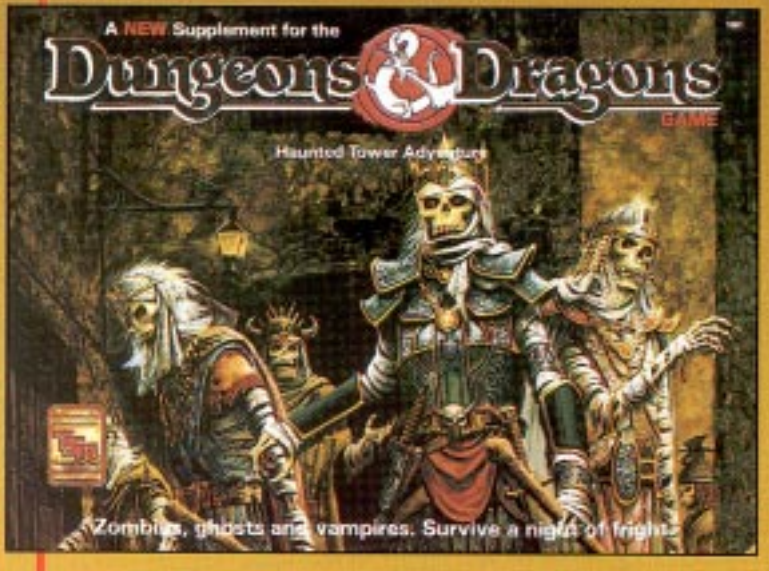
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Dragon MAGAZINE

Issue #186
Vol. XVII, No. 5
October 1992

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DRAGON® Magazine (ISSN 0279-6848) is published monthly by TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756 (201 Sheridan Springs Road), Lake Geneva WI 53147, United States of America. The postal address for all materials from the United States of America and Canada except subscription orders is: DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, (201 Sheridan Springs Road), Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.; telephone (414) 248-3625; fax (414) 248-0389. The postal address for all materials from Europe is: DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom; telephone: (0223) 212517 (U.K.), 44-223-212517 (international); telex: 818761; fax (0223) 248066 (U.K.), 44-223-248066 (international).

Distribution: DRAGON Magazine is available from game and hobby shops throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and through a limited number of other overseas outlets. Distribution to the book trade in the United States is by Random House, Inc., and in Canada by Random House of Canada, Ltd. Distribution to the book trade in the United Kingdom is by TSR Ltd. Send orders to: Random House, Inc., Order Entry Department, Westminster MD 21157, U.S.A.; telephone: (800) 733-3000. Newsstand distribution throughout the United Kingdom is by Comag Magazine Marketing, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE, United Kingdom; telephone: 0895-444055.

Subscriptions: Subscription rates via second-class mail are as follows: $30 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent to an address in the U.S.; $36 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent to an address in Canada; £21 for 12 issues sent to an address within the United Kingdom; £30 for 12 issues sent to an address in Europe; $50 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent by surface mail to any other address, or $90 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent air mail to any other address. Payment in full must accompany all payment include checks or money orders made payable to TSR, Inc., or charges to valid Mastercard or VISA credit cards; send subscription orders with payments to: TSR, Inc., PO. Box 5695, Boston MA 02206, U.S.A. In the United Kingdom, methods of payment include cheques or money orders made payable to TSR Ltd., or charges to a valid ACCESS or VISA credit card; send subscription orders with payments to TSR Ltd., as per that address above. Prices are subject to change without prior notice. The issue of expiration of each subscription is printed on

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COVER

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Second-class postage paid at Lake Geneva, Wis., U.S.A., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to DRAGON Magazine, TSR, Inc., PO. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. USPS 318-790, ISSN 1062-2101.

LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, PO. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

Old issues, big bucks?

Dear Dragon,

I currently have in my possession a collection of DRAGON Magazines dating back to issue #95, with the exception of three issues missing. I have often seen back issues selling for more than the cover price, and I was wondering if my collection has any special value. Thank you.

John Buhrmann
Winsted CT

We don't have "official" figures on the value of old issues of DRAGON Magazine or DUNGEON® Adventures, though the TSR Mail Order Hobby Shop has prices available for the older issues it sells. You might be able to use these figures in determining the relative worth of your own collection, To get the current price list for back issues of DRAGON Magazine, DUNGEON Adventures, and POLYHEDRON® Newszine, write to: Mail Order Hobby Shop, PO. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

If you want to sell your old issues, here are some suggestions:

1. Advertise them at your local hobby shop by giving the shopkeeper a list of the issues you have and their prices, then asking if he can post the list in a prominent place in the shop or have it on hand if anyone asks.

2. Place a notice in a gaming magazine (we don't do this for DRAGON Magazine and DUNGEON Adventures, but RPGA™ Network members can do it in POLYHEDRON Newszine).

3. Place a notice in a local shopper's newspaper, preferably one serving a metropolitan area with lots of people or having a college campus or military base.

4. Advertise on computer bulletin boards devoted to gaming.

5. Put up a small notice (with permission) at a local grocery store or library, if a bulletin board is available.

6. Bring your issues, carefully bagged and marked, to a game convention featuring a games auction. The GEN CON® games fair has an auction each year in which such items may be sold.

7. Make up handouts describing your collection and give them to gaming friends in other cities, so they can post them for you in their own local hobby stores and whatnot (possibly even giving them out to the people in their gaming groups).

Dying breed?

Dear Dragon,

I play only the AD&D® 2nd Edition game. I think of myself as a simple DM. I don't use the SPELLJAMMER® set. I don't use psionics. I don't use the Nordic or Charlemagne supplements. I don't play in the RAVENLOFT®, DARK SUN™, or FORGOTTEN REALMS® settings.

I do follow the rules. I use all the options printed in the *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide.* I use the classic modules, such as the G-D-Q series[*the "giants, drow, and* Queen of the Demonweb Pits" *series, revised and reprinted in 1986 as GDQl-7* Queen of the Spiders]. I play in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting. And I run a damn good campaign, if I do say so myself. I've been the DM of the same group for three years. We started with 1st-level characters in module U1 *[The Sinister Secret of Saltmarsh]* and are now about to leave module G3 and start Dl.

I received DRAGON issue #183 a while back. I looked at the table of contents, then I looked through the rest of the magazine. What I found was that most of the magazine offered nothing I could use. Tell me: Am I among the last of a dying breed? When I first started reading DRAGON Magazine, it seemed to be tailored to folks like myself. Now I'm reduced to "Dragonmirth."

Listen, I know the gaming industry is changing, but how about remembering those players who have been with you for years and helped get the gaming industry where it is today?

Victor Roy Gonzalez
Los Angeles CA

The central theme of issue #183 was on combining magic and technology in role-playing games, so we knew it wouldn't appeal to everyone. Nonetheless, there were a number of articles in that particular issue that we hoped AD&D game players would enjoy and use:

—The editorial discussed using plot, place, and character ideas from modern fantasy fiction in your role-playing campaign. Any number of these ideas could be fitted into a "traditional" AD&D campaign with ease. (The "techniques of terror" from the RAVENLOFT boxed set and the "Game Wizards" column in issue #162 would work wonders in a subterranean campaign such the one in the old G-D-Q series.)

—"Magic & Technology Meet At Last!" detailed ways to mix the GAMMA WORLD® and AD&D games, which could take place on a limited basis in otherwise "normal" fantasy campaigns (e.g., a mutant able to transport itself from plane to plane might appear in a dungeon and confound everyone it meets with its peculiar powers).

—"Unidentified Gaming Objects" had a brief note on page 30 about the possibility that in certain campaigns the derros, a degenerate dwarven race in the AD&D game, might develop magical or technological flying saucers, if not other horrible devices as well, which they would use in an attempt to conquer their world. This would make a particularly wild (and perhaps frightening) fantasy campaign.

—The race of araneas, from "The Voyage of the Princess Ark," *could be adapted from the D&D® game to the AD&D game and placed in dungeons and ruins, Heroes might find these spiderlike creatures to be especially horrible opponents, given their poisonous, spell-using, spider-summoning, and shape-changing abilities. Araneas could give even drow a run for their money.*

—"The Vikings' Dragons" provides numerous all-new dragons that can be used outside of Norse campaigns. The monster known as Corpse Tearer could appear as a unique underground threat, ruling its own subterranean grotto full of undead humans and monsters. Low-level heroes might meet only a few of Corpse Tearer's undead assistants, not the beast itself.

—Maybe I'm just perverse, but wouldn't it be interesting to make up statistics for an AD&D game mutant or magical character like Kylun, detailed in "The MARVEL®-Phile" on pages 80-82 of issue #183? He would make a fascinating NPC, perhaps having crossed universes once more in some comic-book plot, or else being a native of the AD&D world just as Vincent was a native of the tunnels beneath New York City in the TV series "Beauty and the Beast."

—"Forum" carried a number of letters from readers on creative campaign design and player/referee tips that can be used by almost anyone in any game campaign.

—"Sage Advice," of course, answers important questions about the AD&D® game, and every campaign can use it.

—"TSR Previews," "The Game Wizards," and advertisements in the magazine offer information on new products that can enhance your campaign.

We will certainly work harder to give AD&D game players a large dose of the kinds of articles they want, and we hope this issue turns out to be one of those highly useful ones. It is important, however, to look past the labels that articles have, such as which AD&D campaign world or even which role-playing game they are meant for, and to dig out the elements that you can use in your own game campaign. Often, only a minor amount of tinkering can produce a whole new set of wonders and horrors for gaming use.

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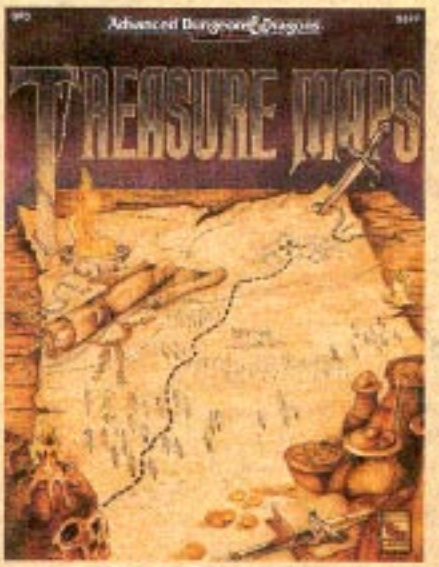
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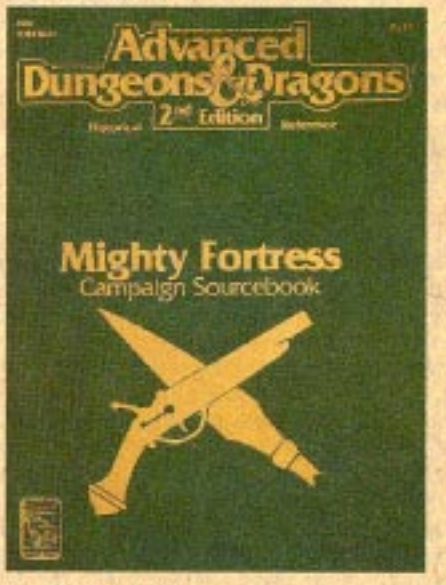
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EDITORIAL

The Game Fair That Ate Milwaukee

We'd been having meetings here at TSR about the 1992 GEN CON®/ORIGINS™ game fair for over a year before it happened, but it had always been a sort of academic thing, like having a round-table discussion on how squid reproduce[1] or whether the sun will go nova in a billion years. The game fair became a reality for me on Tuesday, August 18th, when I took my son to Margaret Weis's house for the Pre-Convention Warm-Up Party and found her hosting what I first took to be the Coalition forces from Operation: Desert Storm, but which turned out to be only lots and lots of convention-going gamers.

My son John, of course, ran off to help the Minneapolis gamers set up tents in Margaret's back yard while Margaret, Tracy Hickman, and several hundred other confused people rehearsed for their DRAGONLANCE® play. Everyone, even the Canadians, had already heard from Margaret that I allegedly threw a paper airplane off the balcony at the downtown Milwaukee Hyatt several conventions ago, a charge that to this day I completely deny. Worse, they convinced my seven-year-old son that I had done it, and he told everyone he'd seen me do it, which was impossible since he wasn't there and he would have been only two or three at the time, and besides I didn't do it anyway. The evening wound up with me lending my house to the Canadian armed forces for the night, while I stayed in Milwaukee.

Wednesday morning, I dragged myself into MECCA to see what sort of amusements were brewing for what had been extensively billed as the greatest role-playing, board, computer, and miniatures gaming convention in the history of humanity.[2] I walked into the exhibition hall and immediately discovered that the billing was, if anything, understated. The sight of the three-story TSR castle taking up most of a city block brought home the fact that this convention was going to outdo them all. (This same megalithic structure, dubbed "Fortress TSR," later won five satirical Critic's Choice Awards, which I took to mean that the display was greatly envied and admired.)

Dale Donovan and I spent Wednesday afternoon setting up the Periodicals section for DRAGON® Magazine, DUNGEON® Adventures, and AMAZING® Stories, placing my adopted son Bud on a stool in a niche of the castle to sell our magazine-logo T-shirts. (For more on Bud, see DUNGEON issue #33, page 76.) All went well until our publisher Jim Ward found the mallet for the huge brass gong in the AL-QADIM™ demo area and began to bang away with glee every few seconds. The mallet was soon accidentally lost or stolen, and a sorrowful Jim could be seen wandering from booth to booth asking, "Where's my banger?" or words to that effect, but no one had the slightest idea of where it went, particularly not myself, Karen Boomgarden, or five other people whose names I won't mention. Afterwards, many of the exhibitors and TSR crew went to the Safe House, that famed Milwaukee espionage bar and eatery, and many events occurred there of a nature that cannot be discussed in this magazine, or at least so I've heard. I didn't go this year, preferring to go home and crash as quickly as possible.

Thursday's dawn found the staff and exhibitors at their stations, and at 10 A.M. the gamer hurricane began. You couldn't see the floor through the feet. FASA had a cityscape mural for its SHADOWRUN* game that was two stories high and twice as long; the Steve Jackson Games' booth had full-size laser cannon models (non-functional mock-ups, I assume), as well as a huge replica of an Ogre (the supertank kind, not the giant humanoid kind). Most booths also had extensive miniatures set-ups to showcase their games, with R. Talsorian's CYBERPUNK* system, Steve Jackson Games' OGRE* miniature rules, Milton Bradley's BATTLEMASTERS* game, and FASA's SHADOWRUN and BATTLETECH* rules coming to mind. Many small-press companies presented dozens of new and intriguing systems for gamers to try, such as a set of Aztec-style *mecha* -combat rules, and almost everyone had new products to show off.

As with every game fair for the last few years, every sort of item was for sale as well, such as rainbow-colored T-shirts, Celtic harp music on cassettes, chain-mail headpieces, real gems and jewelry, brass goblets, fluorescent paints, Cthulhu himself in miniature, dice the size of your foot, *Star Trek* and *Dirty Pair* stick-pins, books on every battle from Hastings to the Persian Gulf war, and even baseball caps with propellers. Computer and on-line game booths captured the attention of many, especially the Origin computer-game booth with its *Wing Commander* game, which I first mistook to be an actual movie. The art show had to be moved upstairs to make room for the castle and dealers in the main hall. (I hear the art show was outstanding, but I couldn't get up to see it. Rats.) Jim Ward found the gong mallet again, then tragically lost it for a second time, a sad event that brought tears of joy to many. Spider-Man joined us



Photo by Larry Smith

at the TSR castle, and Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman were present in their own booth with their Minneapolis and Canadian fans. When the day was over, the exhibitors and TSR crew again went off to the Safe House, where many more events occurred that cannot be discussed here without my having to consult an attorney first. I helped with a SPELLJAMMER® seminar, then went home.[3]

Friday was much like Thursday, except for starting with the excellent RPGA™ Network breakfast. I met gamers who had flown over from Japan, Finland, Great Britain, and Israel, and I even met a man from the FBI (led over by Margaret Weis) who asked me about the paper-airplane incident.[4] My fiancee Gail, who is not a gamer and doesn't read this magazine, came over as well to get an idea of exactly what I've been talking about all this time. She seemed to enjoy her exhibition-hall tour despite the amazed looks on her face after seeing a particularly outlandish booth display or gamer's costume.

As for the rest of the day, our staff gave seminars, sold more magazines and T-shirts, and once in a while got time off to wander the hall. The "Cthulhu for President" campaign [5] was in full swing at the Chaosium booth, and David Brazil, who wore the sandwich sign for the campaign, made absolutely sure that I wrote down his name for mention in this column. The Chain Maille Fashions booth awarded me with a special gift that at first I hid in embarrassment because I thought it was a chain-mail loincloth or codpiece, but which my art director Larry Smith has just informed me is actually a bracelet (ha, ha, I knew it all along, and no, I didn't try it on except as a bracelet). I also watched the Milton Bradley BATTLEMASTERS video so many times that I could visualize it perfectly late at night when I didn't want to think about anything game-related at all. A long line of eager gamers wound through TSR's castle for book signings by Bob *(The Legacy)* Salvatore and the Margaret & Tracy show, among many others. The gong mallet stayed out of Jim Wards hands. Game designer Allen Varney passed out copies of the itinerary for his upcoming world tour, and we made bets on which country he'd be in when he ran out of money.[6]

The TSR-sponsored game-industry party Friday night was a gala event capped off by the arrival of Jim Ward wearing a tuxedo, a sight that caused religious hysteria among many TSR staff members. I met an incredible number of people, some of whom I actually remembered from past conventions, and my fiancee had a great discussion with Jim Ward, who was happily threatening me with disgrace, torture, banishment, and worse because of a minor but amusing incident earlier in the day.[7] I saw Warren and Caroline and Margaret and Ahmed and Mike and Mike and Mike and Lisa and Gregory and Ann and David and Newt and Allen and Liz and even David O. Miller, an artist buddy from Louisville who played AD&D® games with me a decade ago, with his very charming fiancee—congratulations!

Saturday, we . . . actually, I don't recall much from Saturday, as there were so many gamers rushing into the halls at opening time that some TSR staffers were nearly trampled. The surge of gamers built for hours throughout the day, hardly letting up. I was called to run a D&D® game demo in place of Bruce Heard, who was sick, and our group discarded the rules and played "Destroy All Monsters" for two hours.[8] Many open demos at the TSR castle included huge models and dioramas of things like a DARK SUN™ gladiatorial arena, a DRAGONLANCE flying castle with dragons, and a huge SPELLJAMMER asteroid base with three large 25-mm ship models (all models and dioramas were one of a kind only, not for sale). I noticed a tall drow princess and Galadriel among the costumed convention-goers, as well as many fencers, barbarians, and scantily clad dancing girls. There was markedly less male and female skin visible at this convention than at the last two GEN CON game fairs, perhaps because of the air conditioning. Bleary-eyed exhibitors, fresh from a night at the Safe House, would mumble the words "Spy's Demise" and nod their heads knowingly. I wouldn't know anything about that, because I went home early and crashed with no M&Ms.[9]

Sunday was the day that exhausted exhibitionists—ah, I meant *exbibitors*—dragged themselves in for a final day of riotous fun, fresh from the Safe House. It had gotten noticeably cold in the hall, thanks to the air conditioning, and in the air hung the sounds of the gong (rung with great glee by Jim Ward—where were you, Karen B.?), bleats from Bruce Heard's ram's horn, and the slow, steady *boom*, *boom*, *boom* of bone-rattling footsteps from the GEnie booth's BATTLETECH simulator (are *mecha* pilots deaf?). A minotaur in red robes gave me an orange stone, my son John came in with his mom and stepdad to see the video games, and a Swedish gamer complained to me about the appearance of a Swedish city as a Soviet airbase in the RED STORM RISING™ game ("The only Soviet jets that came to Sweden were the ones that wanted to be shot down," he told me). Another gamer gave me a dozen photographs of some stringed musical instrument as part of a correction he wished us to make in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Complete Bard's Handbook* ("Now, this is what a balalaika *really* looks like!").[10] By the end of the day, the only TSR staff member who looked as fresh as on the first day was Bud, still sitting on his stool and smiling as only a cloth mannequin can. He's wearing my convention T-shirt even now, slouching in my office chair.

It's Monday now, the convention is over, and my Geo Storm has been recalled. Tonight, I'm going to pick up my car, pick up my son, then be a vegetable and have some fun. And maybe I don't have any M&Ms, but I did get a couple of Butterfinger bars for lunch, and they helped. My thanks to the Canadian military for not wrecking my house, and to Gail for not leaving me after she saw what I *really* do for a living. See you next month.[12]



Footnotes

1. I don't want to know.
2. Since the Roman Colosseum fell apart, anyway.
3. Thursday was the only day during which I got some M&Ms; they disappeared rapidly, and no one brought more.
4. He really *was* from the FBI, but he was a gamer, so he was okay. And I didn't do it.
5. Slogan: "Why settle for the lesser of two evils?"
6. Smart money says it will be Thailand.
7. It had nothing to do with the gong. Don't ask.
8. I faked the stats for "Supertroll." I hope none of the survivors minded that.
9. I hereby apologize to Margaret Weis for trying to strangle her in the TSR castle while she was telling Karen[11] and Vince about my alleged exploits in the Hyatt. I also thank Karen[11] for not breaking my arm when she immobilized me.
10. It looks like a flat, triangular banjo. I knew you would ask.
11. This is not the same Karen as was mentioned earlier. This one has a black belt in Okinawan karate.
12. I forgot to mention Ray Norton, an old Army buddy who gamed with me in West Germany a decade ago and has now turned up as a hobby-shop owner in Janesville, Wis. I especially want to thank the guys from Fayetteville, N.C., who brought much-appreciated greetings from the wonderful Al and Feliet of the Hobbit Hobby Shop, right next to Ft. Bragg. Hi, Al and Feliet. You people are the greatest.

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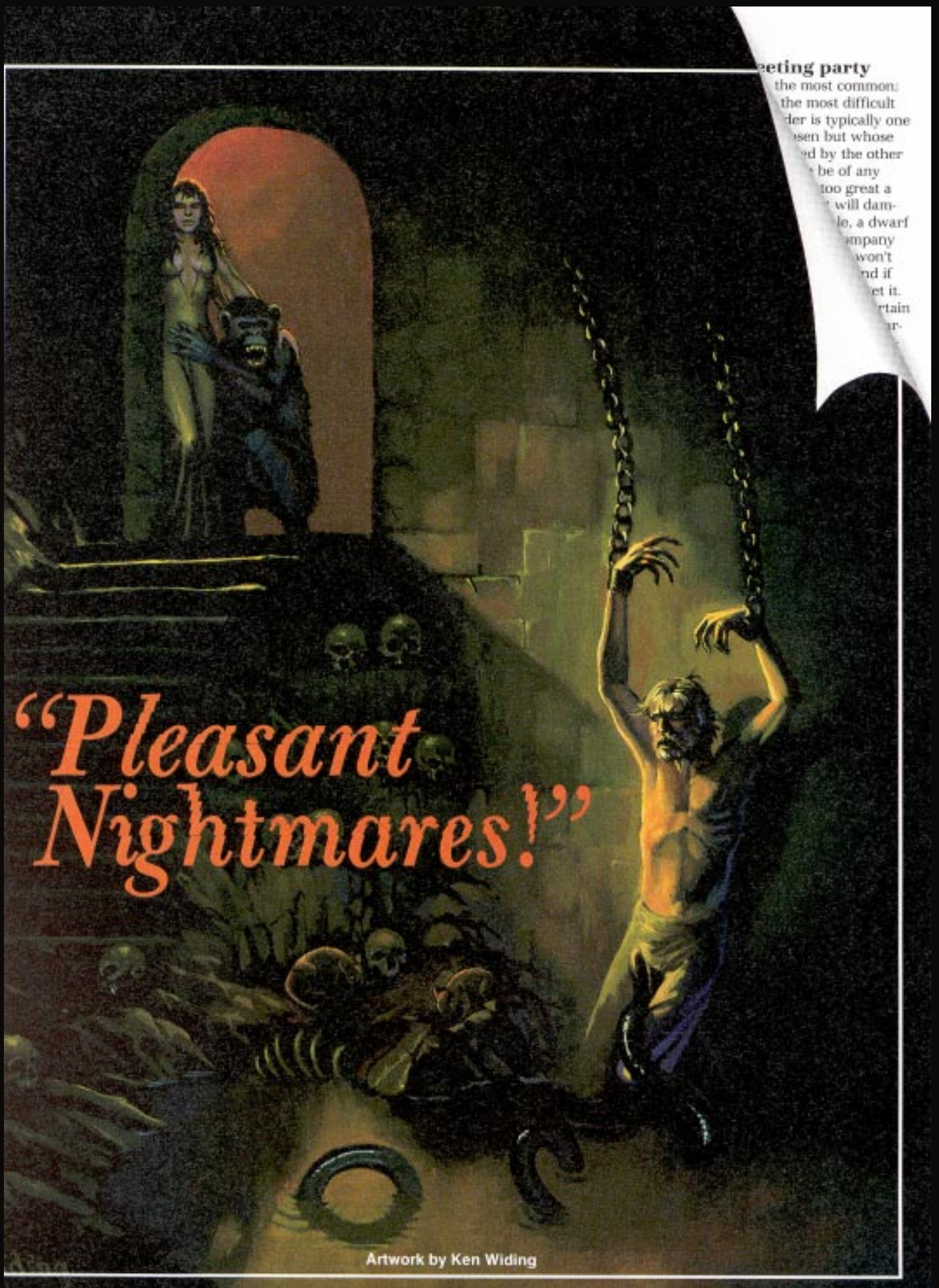
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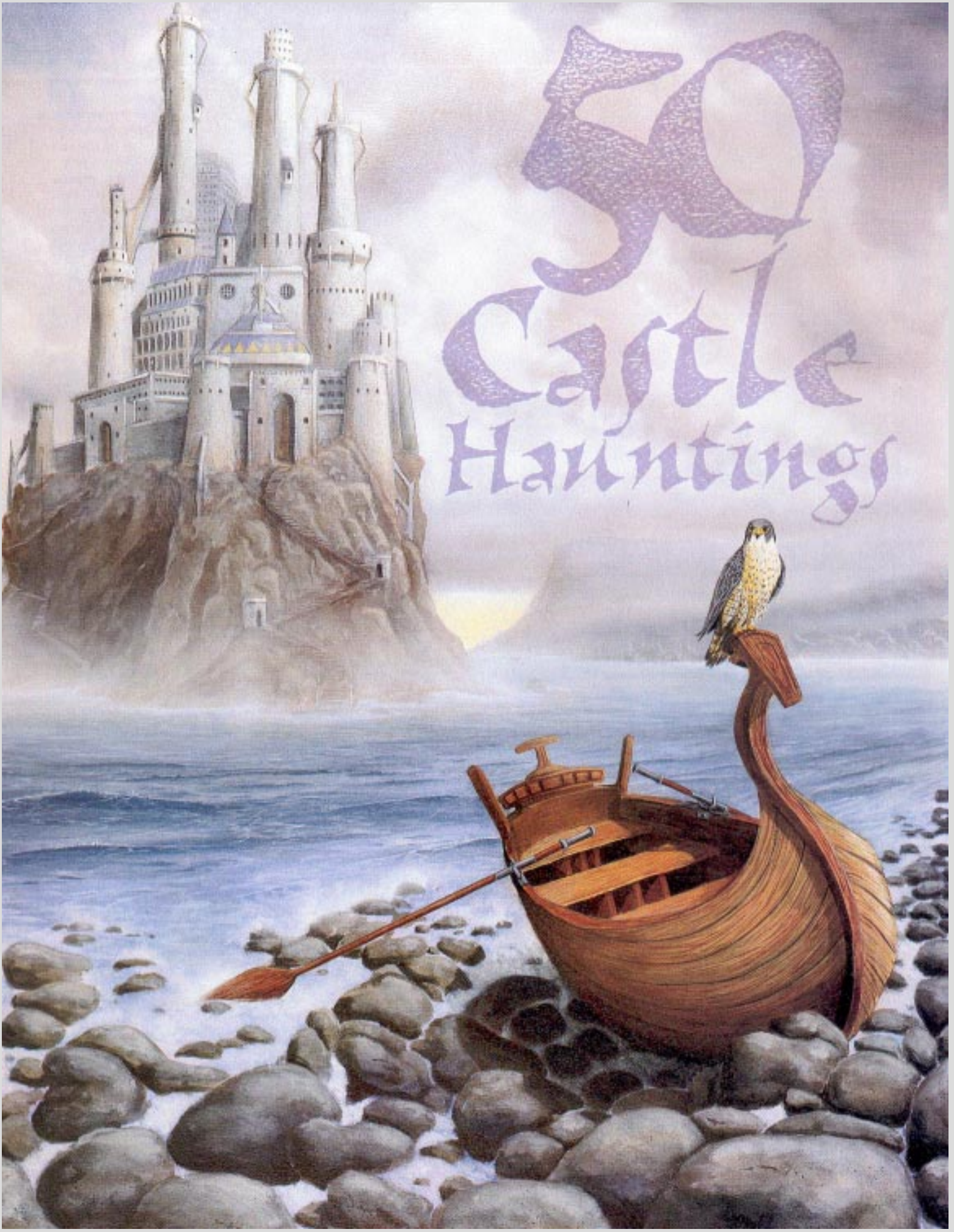
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Artwork by Ken Widing

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the most common: the most difficult der is typically one sen but whose d by the other be of any too great a will dam- le, a dwarf mpany won't nd if et it. rtain ar-


50
Castle
Hauntings

Your new castle may already have residents—with ideas of their own.

by Michael Gabriel

Artwork by Mark Poole

Almost every castle in Gothic literature has its ghost. When player characters inherit or capture an existing castle or build a new castle on the site of an old one, they might discover that a ghost comes with the property. This spirit may be malevolent or benign, appearing only on certain occasions such as the anniversary of its death or appearing every night.

Fifty hauntings are presented here. Any AD&D® game DM™ who wishes to "haunt" a castle can use the ideas listed here to roll up an interesting encounter or deliberately "flesh out" a spirit to provide an amusing or chilling long-term guest in a PC's abode. Roll 1d10, then consult the chart below to determine the nature of the haunting.

1d10	Haunting
1-4	Undead
5-8	Curse
9-0	Phantom shift

The DM should roll 1d20 if a curse or undead haunting has been indicated, or 1d10 if a phantom shift has come up, to determine which haunting is taking place according to the text that follows.

If the DM wishes to determine randomly the frequency at which the haunting occurs, roll ld6: 1 = Nightly appearances; 2, 3, or 4 = Appearances every night of the full moon; 5 or 6 = Annual appearances.

To determine how many hauntings a castle should have, roll ld6: 1, 2, 3, or 4 = One haunting; 5 = Two hauntings; 6 = ld4+1 hauntings.

Undead hauntings

1—A coach appears in the castle's courtyard. If any character (PC or NPC) gets in the coach, it heads off down the road at breakneck speed. The driver and its two passengers (not including any characters) slowly turn into skeletons as the coach rumbles toward the cliff it plunged over years before. The skeletons do not attack their living passengers, though the fall off the cliff may kill anyone who remains in the coach.

2—This haunting appears to a random PC in a dream, taking him for a walk through the castle that ends at a spot on the wall or in the courtyard. If the character later digs at this spot, a murder victim's body (50% chance of hidden treasure) is found. Giving the body proper burial and seeking out its murderer ends this haunting. Treasures may be kept if vengeance is completed; otherwise, a new haunting begins, focused on the "thief."

3—A ghostly watchdog howls in the kennels whenever a member of the castle owner's family faces death. It is still carrying out its guard duties as it did in life. It cannot be seen or exorcised while any members of the lord's family live. If all members of the family die, the ghostly canine is never heard again.



Artwork by John Stanko

4—An invisible drum sounds from the battlements whenever the castle is about to be attacked. This is caused by the spirit of a long-dead guard.

5—An ancestor's ghost guards the building it died in. Any undead that attempt to enter must first battle this protective spirit. It has the statistics it had when alive, and it can be hit only by magical weapons (being magical, its weapons count as magical in combat as well). It does not reappear if defeated in combat.

6—Footsteps are heard in the night, and doors creak and slam, but nothing is ever seen. This area is haunted by a weak poltergeist that does not attack. It might have some connection with an ancient crime, its actions revealing something about the events that took place.

7—The ghost of a dead sergeant walks the battlements. Any guards who carouse, sleep, or drink on duty are beaten in reprimand by this protective spirit. It has the statistics it had in life and can be hit only by magical weapons.

8—The eyes of a portrait seem to follow a character. The painting can speak to him or her if it chooses. There is a 50% chance that this is a harmless spirit that may have useful information for a character, and a 50% chance that it is a vengeful haunt that slowly takes possession of the character in order to harm some enemy.

9—One room of the castle contains a skull hidden in the stonework. Another room contains a headless skeleton, similarly hidden. If the skull and its body are reunited, the skeleton returns to life as a lich (it can do nothing in its current form). The original owner of the castle (if not a PC) defeated the lich and had its remains so buried to prevent it from returning; the bones cannot be destroyed by any nonmagical means.

10—A forgotten prisoner died in chains in the castle dungeon. The sound of rattling chains can still be heard there. Exorcism lets this spirit rest in peace.

11—A bricked-up room contains an emaciated vampire, too weak to do anything but scratch at the walls. Breaking into the room frees it. Any type of vampire (including RAVENLOFT® setting varieties) could be used.

12—A small child is frequently seen playing in the halls of the castle. If the child is spoken to, the apparition vanishes. This harmless spirit considers the castle "safe." An ***exorcism*** removes it.

13—A number of rusted suits of plate mail stand in a display hall in the castle. At times, clanking noises and the sounds of movement can be heard from this hall. This is caused by a poltergeist that resides in one of the suits of armor and periodically takes it for a walk. In a RAVENLOFT campaign, this is a Doomguard, left by a long-dead owner, going on a patrol. It does not attack unless it is attacked first.

14—The ghost of a dead paladin stands before the castle's treasure vault. It fights anyone not a member of his order who approaches the vault. It has the statistics it had in life. If all the treasure is removed by one of its order, it vanishes forever.

15—A powerful sorcerer was buried near the castle after his hands were cut off for his many magical crimes. One still-living hand prowls the estate, looking for a way to uncover and reanimate the rest of the body.

16—A headless horseman rides the road outside the castle, seeking to take other people's heads. Treat this haunting as a ghost, except that it has 6 HD and does 1d8+2 hp damage with its sword. Anyone slain by the horseman is found later without a head. This ghost always returns, even if defeated, unless someone can locate and return its original head to it.

17—A poet is buried in the castle graveyard. A ghostly figure leaves flowers here from time to time. This is the harmless spirit of a long-dead admirer who does nothing more dangerous than steal flowers from the castle flower beds.

18—Each time the family vault is opened, it is found that the stone coffins within have been moved and rearranged. There is a 50% chance that this is caused by a harmless poltergeist, and a 50% chance that a nest of ghouls is using this vault as a gathering place.

19—Evil PCs are awakened by chained spirits who take them on an astral journey to their own futures, to show them what fate awaits them if they do not change their ways.

20—The castle library contains relics brought from an Egyptian-like area by a now-deceased collector, including a mummy and a scroll with hieroglyphs. Legend has it that this mummy has been seen to walk the castle hallways. Reading the scroll aloud in front of the mummy may (10% chance per level of the reader) actually activate the mummy. The reader then has the same 10% chance per level to control the mummy. An uncontrolled mummy attacks all living beings. In a RAVENLOFT campaign, treat this haunting as a greater mummy.

Curses

1—A former castle occupant who was an inveterate gambler made one last bet on his deathbed. He lost, and a minor death still appears from time to time to see if there are any new wagerers. It appears in a character's room and challenges him or her to a game of cards or chess (50% chance of each). If the character refuses to play, it vanishes. If the character plays and wins, the minor death vanishes and the character's natural lifespan is increased by l-5 years, or he or she gets one special chance to avoid death at some point in the future. If the character plays and loses, the minor death attacks to kill. It has the same statistics as a death from a *deck of many things:* AC -4, 33 HP, strikes with scythe for 2-16 hp damage, never misses, always strikes first, uses weapon specialization only if the character does. No one else will be able to see or attack the death. In a RAVENLOFT game, treat this spirit as a grim reaper.

2—A group of murder victims are buried in the castle cellar, put there by some past villainous occupant. Any living being who goes down there is pelted with flagstones (ld6 hp damage) hurled by 3-30 skeletons who rise through the floor to attack. If the victim flees, the room again resumes its normal appearance. The skeletons reappear if destroyed, but reburying them in consecrated ground ends this curse.

3—Three skeletons stand around an empty grave in the castle graveyard, waiting for the return of the one who murdered them. The grave is for the murderer. They are not interested in attacking anyone else. Destroying the skeletons cannot end this haunting; they will just return. Their murderer must be found, executed, and buried in this grave to end this haunting.

4—A noose hangs in an empty cell in the castle dungeon. Any evil character who remains in the cell for more than one day must save vs. death magic every day thereafter or die from the oppressive atmosphere of death present. This is a very powerful curse and requires exorcism to end it, followed by burning the rope with magical fire.

5—The castle chapel contains the powerful spirit of a past priest. Anyone who attempts to defile the chapel is touched by the flaming hand of this haunting. If a save vs. spells is not made, the victim's flesh catches fire from this touch and slowly burns, until the victim is reduced to ashes. Damage is 1 hp the first hour, 2 hp the second hour, 3 hp the third hour, etc., until the victim dies or receives a remove curse spell. This haunting can be *exorcised* or allowed to remain as a guardian. In a RAVENLOFT campaign, the guardian is a greater mummy with this same special attack.

6—The former owner's favorite room has the owner's shadow on the wall. Anyone who dies in the castle has his or her shadow appear there as well. The shadows do nothing unless attempts are made to remove them, at which time they attack as real shadows. They can be exorcised.

7—The stuffed animal heads in the trophy room occasionally return to life, inflicting bite damage on anyone they can reach. Moving the trophies to another room ends this haunting.

8—A passage links the castle to a ruined evil underground temple. Anyone who spends more than a few hours down there must save vs. spells or gradually become evil over the next 2-5 weeks. Nothing can remove the evil of this accursed place, and sealing it off is advised. *Atonement* removes the effect it had on any characters.

9—The castle was built on the site of an ancient graveyard, causing the entire castle to become attuned to the spirit world. Any spell used in the castle that involves speaking with or animating dead has double effectiveness. Efforts to turn undead have only half normal effectiveness—half normal chances to succeed, plus half normal number of undead turned.

10—Any dead buried in the castle graveyard return as ghouls. This effect is caused by a strange meteorite buried in the graveyard. If this is found and removed, the effect ceases, and the meteorite can be forged into 1-3 evil magical swords of +3 power.

11—The castle stands on an ancient elven holy spot. Elves who discover this may wish to protect the site (50% chancel or level the castle to return the place to its prehuman appearance (50% chancel. Efforts to turn undead here have double normal effectiveness.

12—The castle itself is alive by some magical means and can operate all the gates, doors, and artillery unassisted. There is a 50% chance that it is friendly to its current occupants and a 50% chance that it is hostile. It is controlled by a spirit whose body was buried under one of the castle gates as a guardian. Removing this body to consecrated ground ends this haunting.

13—A huge hell hound appears outside the castle walls from time to time, seeking to devour members of the castle owner's family as punishment for some long-hidden crime. The hound ceases to return only if the crime is made known and justice is done.

14—A beautiful black horse approaches the castle gates. If it is approached, it turns into a nightmare. The horse appears because the castle was built on an ancient evil unholy spot. *Exorcism* may (50% chancel stop its appearances.

15—If anyone is murdered in the castle, the victim's ghost follows the killer around, though no one but the killer can see the haunting. Bringing the killer to justice allows this spirit to depart. It has no powers or abilities.

16—The castle has no mirrors, because every time a person in the castle looks in a mirror, the face of a hag is reflected in place of his own. This is the result of a curse by a still-living haglike monster (e.g., an annis) who was once insulted by one of the people in the castle. It is necessary to find the hag in order to compel her to lift this curse.

17—A statue in the castle weeps or bleeds from its wounds. If the tears or blood are collected, they act as holy water.

18—Blood or slime drips down the castle wall for no discernible reason. This blood or slime, if collected, acts as unholy water.

19—One of the trees on the estate is planted on the grave of a murdered man. At times the tree takes on the form of a hangman's tree. If it is cut down and burned, it does not regrow.

20—The spirit of a woman who froze to death outside the castle attempts to entice characters outside in winter to share her fate. Those who follow her out have a 5% chance per round of becoming lost in the snow. This is the result of a curse placed on the castle by an aggrieved relative who was a wizard. It is necessary to track down this wizard in order to break this spell.

Phantom shifts

1—Upon entering a room, a character finds himself in the castle's past during some chilling event, such as a murder or a battle. When the character leaves the room, it returns to normal, but any items the character may have picked up and any damage he received remains. This is a powerful form of a poltergeist's *phantom shift.*

2—A character finds he can step into a large wall tapestry's scene. This may function as a *teleport* spell 50% of the time or a *plane shift* 50% of the time. If the RAVENLOFT setting is available, the tapestry features a frightening landscape scene

that leads to the Domains of Dread.

3—The castle has a gallery of waxwork statues of famous people of the past, including famous criminals. When the phantom shift begins, these statues are replaced by the living people they represent (50% chancel or cause the viewer to appear with them in their time (50% chance). This effect wears off after one night.

4—An old, covered well in the castle cellar is sealed with a large stone cap. The bodies of several murder victims were hidden here in the years when this place was used as the headquarters of a cult of a god of death. A phantom shift occasionally takes place here that allows spirits to escape from the underworld into our world. The seal was put here to prevent their escape. If the seal is broken, one spirit may escape each day. Treat the escaping spirit as a shadow.

5—One tower room that belonged to a long-dead wizard has a strange stained glass window. Staring at it triggers a phantom shift that causes a portal to open to a random dimension. There is a 50% chance that something will step through. Undead guardians, perhaps the wizard himself, are likely to be present, along with traps. If the RAVENLOFT boxed set is being used, treat this as a one-way portal leading to the demiplane.

6—A door has been painted on one of the walls. On a 10% chance per day, a phantom shift causes it to open to a random dimension; something will come through. If the RAVENLOFT set is available, this door opens to another door there.

7—A dead werewolf is buried in the castle graveyard. Every morning, fresh claw marks appear on the headstone. If the grave is left alone, nothing more happens. If the grave is opened, the gravediggers trigger a phantom shift that takes them back to the time when the werewolf terrorized the area. They must find and slay the werewolf, then bury it in this grave to return to their own time.

8—A hidden desk drawer contains a long-lost letter from a dead castle occupant. If another letter is placed in the drawer, it is delivered to the dead person in his or her own time. Limited communication between the centuries is thus possible.

9—A room in the castle was home to a long-dead sorcerer who was fascinated by dinosaurs; strange roars sometimes come from this chamber. The wizards spirit still haunts this room in poltergeist form, causing phantom shifts that animate the dinosaur skeletons in the room (50% chancel or cause a large mirror in the room to act as a portal to a land or age of dinosaurs (50% chance).

10—The castle has an extensive library, with some other-planar books if the DM wishes. If a character removes one particular book from the library, the poltergeist's phantom shift takes place, causing the character to vanish and become a character in the pages of that book. The vanished character can return to our world only by completing the challenges in the book. If he cannot do this or is killed in the attempt, he remains permanently in the book. The castle has a reputation for having its guests disappear after a night of reading in the library. A close examination results in many of the missing being found as storybook characters.

If the DM discovers that the players like their castles haunted, he or she can keep these unnatural inhabitants around and use them to add color to the campaign. In this case, any defeated monster vanishes when "killed" but reappears, ready for action, when the next haunting time rolls around. If the players dislike these uninvited guests, the PCs can simply arrange to have the place *exorcised* after the monsters have been defeated. The details required for a successful *exorcism* vary and are left to the DM's imagination. A successful *exorcism* should provide permanent "spiritual fumigation" until the DM rules otherwise. Ω

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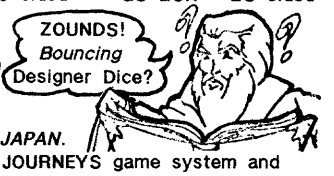
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Modern-horror adventure hooks for

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Mission:



GDW's DARK CONSPIRACY* system is a game of high-tech horror set in the near future. Players have a wide variety of character classes to choose from, each of which may become involved in an adventure or campaign in a different way. This article suggests some adventures in which the game's various classes are most likely to get involved, making it easier for game masters to get the action underway.

Anti-piracy

This category involves activity by both humans and Dark Minions (the evil aliens of the game), and it consists of attacks on shipping and aircraft. The motives include simple criminal activities such as robbery and extortion, as well as terrorist acts and Dark Minion searches for food or slaves.

The merchant marine class listing states that piracy and simple disappearances of merchant vessels are on the rise in the DARK CONSPIRACY game world. It also mentions that sailors on many ships conduct target practice daily, and some crews are even mounting big guns on their vessels. Unless the sailors involved are ex-Navy men, they are not likely to know how best to use big guns, so riding shotgun on a merchant ship thus armed is good employment for mercenaries who served in the Navy. For that matter, some shipments of goods could be so vital (or the corp (corporation) owning the ship could have such political pull) that the vessel in question gains itself a naval escort. This convoy-duty type of adventure is likely to be the most common one for a party composed of Navy personnel.

Other classes could be involved, too. If the ship is in an area where UFOs are reported (such as the Bermuda Triangle), it might rate air cover, getting the U.S. Air Force involved. If the crew is too small or untrained to handle weapons well, it might be backed up by shipboard marines, soldiers, or police of some sort, depending on the value of the vessel or its cargo. If the ship's captain or owner has suspicions of paranormal phenomena being involved in the disappearances, he might actively seek out or advertise for mystics, paraphysicists, professors, or even clergy. Psychic test subjects, cyborg escapees, martial artists, and bodyguards are other classes that might be pressed into temporary service just by being in the wrong place at the right time.

Some classes other than the merchant marine will have natural reasons to be onboard. Any sizeable ship would have, mechanics, while large craft would have their own medical doctors and even clergy (ships' chaplains). A manager might be along on a commercial trip to keep an eye on the merchandise, a journalist might be assigned to a vessel to cover the story of disappearing ships, and drifters, the homeless, and rebellious proles might sign on as extra hands. Given the nature of maritime conditions, a captain might have a hard time conning enough regular sailors into going along. Bounty hunter and criminal types might then be hired in a revival of the good old press gang, scouring the streets for whatever human material is available. A private or government investigator could even sign on as a sailor for cover while trailing a lead.

Some rich corps might even maintain a few cruise ships. If this is the case, any character class might be on board as a passenger. This is a good niche for entertainers and members of the nomenklatura, and politicians and gamblers will be among the other frequent passengers. Some classes could even prove to be unexpectedly useful. If the GM decides that some disappearances are due to Dark Minions based on the mythical sirens, a good entertainer could save the day by keeping the passengers from jumping overboard or keeping the crew from steering the ship onto the rocks. Conversely, a bad entertainer might have everyone wearing earplugs as a matter of course.

Skyjacking is another variant on the piracy theme. With the existence of UFOs in the game, thefts of this type include spacecraft as well as aircraft, so the astronaut is as prominent a class in this adventure as the commercial pilot. Air Force personnel could also be aboard a spacecraft, as might other government agents. Professors, mystics, and paraphysicists could be present to make tests and conduct experiments, with psychic test subjects and cyborg escapees (including some who haven't escaped yet) being some of the subjects. Even environmentalists could be conducting some experiments of their own, and with all that high-tech equipment, mechanics and computer operators will be a must.

Some UFOs may make spaceship-snatching a habit. If a pattern can be discerned, NASA may try the Q-ship gambit, either by sending up an explosives-laden drone or by replacing the cargo and part of the crew with a team of heavily armed commandoes. When the alien boarding party opens the doors, the troops return the shipnapping favor. Mercenaries and Army and Marine troops are best for this type of operation, though explosives and weapons heavier than small arms may be ruled out because of the threat of everyone being killed by a hole blown in the hull. Martial artists and similar fighters might be used, both to avoid a messy, decompressive death and to take prisoners for questioning.

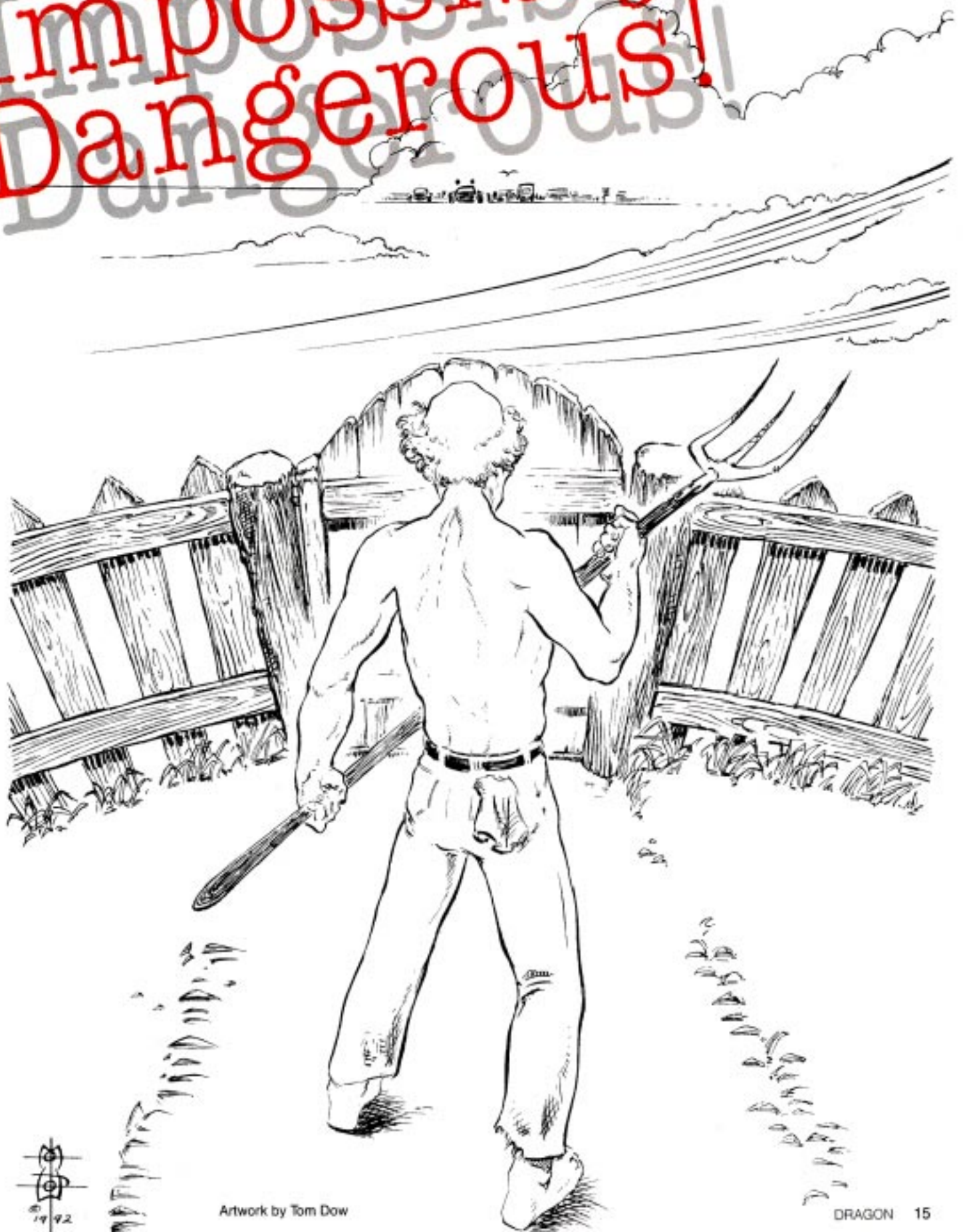
Corporate espionage

This is another perennial favorite among campaign themes. The DARK CONSPIRACY world features giant megacorporations whose personnel (at least the high-ranking ones) are among the handful of people on Earth who live lives of luxury in the time-honored tradition of R. Talsorian's CYBERPUNK* and FASA's SHADOWRUN* games. Indeed, the DARK CONSPIRACY game is a variant on the themes of those two games, with the emphasis on supernatural horror rather than hardware. The huge corps are enemies of the common people and the government, both of whom have people working openly or clandestinely against them. The corps are also at odds with each other. Finally, some of the corps have been infiltrated by the Dark Minions, or at least have members influenced by the latter.

Espionage takes several forms. Government agents, federal and local law-enforcement officials, journalists, and

GDW's DARK CONSPIRACY* game

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Artwork by Tom Dow

private investigators all snoop into corporate business as a matter of course. A computer programmer can go the hacker route to dig up dirt from the company's own electronic files. Mystics, paraphysicists, psychic test subjects, and some professors and cyborg escapees may try more exotic means of investigation.

Politicians and nomenklatura might not do the actual spying, but they might be bankrolling those who are. Street people such as drifters, proles, and the homeless may keep a watch to see who goes in and out the gates, and gangers could do the same. Finally, people whose jobs require them to visit a company or work there all the time, such as truckers, medical doctors, paramedics, attorneys, mechanics, managers, factory workers, and security guards (bodyguards, mercenaries, or soldiers at a military base), may be planted to obtain inside information.

A psychiatrist could subtly pump a corp employee for information during the course of therapy; if that doesn't work, various tell-all drugs could be used during the course of the patient's treatment. Other employees could let something slip while talking to some idol (an athlete, entertainer, politician, or clergyman). Some public employees, such as mail carriers and garbage men, visit a company's headquarters on a regular basis, becoming such a familiar sight that they might get away with certain liberties that would get a perfect stranger tossed in the slammer.

For real inside information, consider the opportunities when a new corporate headquarters is built. The civil engineer might be persuaded to show off the plans of the new building. If not, the plans can be briefly stolen from him or copied. Construction workers are also in a good position to reveal things such as where hidden areas and heavily constructed storerooms are located. Theoretically, commercial and military pilots and astronauts also could pick up much information on "fly-overs," assuming they had legitimate reasons to be passing over the building site in the first place.

There is also the reverse side of the coin: counter-espionage and security. The same people who spy would be good at sniffing out spies as well, while computer programmers could devise special electronic security systems for the firm's electronic files. For physical security, bodyguards and mercenaries are quite useful, as are policemen and military personnel for mid- to high-security projects. On the other hand, a secret headquarters may be in the most run-down part of town, guarded only by the local gangers, homeless, and proles. The theory here is that a place that is unimpressive from the outside will not need a big security force because it is less likely to attract attention, as opposed to a place surrounded by tanks and artillery pieces, which would practically scream "Secret base!" to the world. Finally, some research labs could be in space, manned and protected only by astronauts, scientists (professors, paraphysicists, etc.), and possibly Air Force personnel.

Protect the pioneers

This "Old West" scenario works surprisingly well in the world of the near future. One look at the map of the U.S.A. on page 66 of the DARK CONSPIRACY rulebook shows that a sizeable part of the country is now out-law country, where the only law is the occasional state police patrol on the interstate. Things get worse when the area in question is close to the so-called Demongrounds. Many farmers and small-town residents either cannot afford to move to the city or refuse to (a wise move, considering the state of those urban areas that are now playgrounds for the wealthy). Beset on all sides by greedy corporations, criminals, and Dark Minions, country folk need all the help they can get.

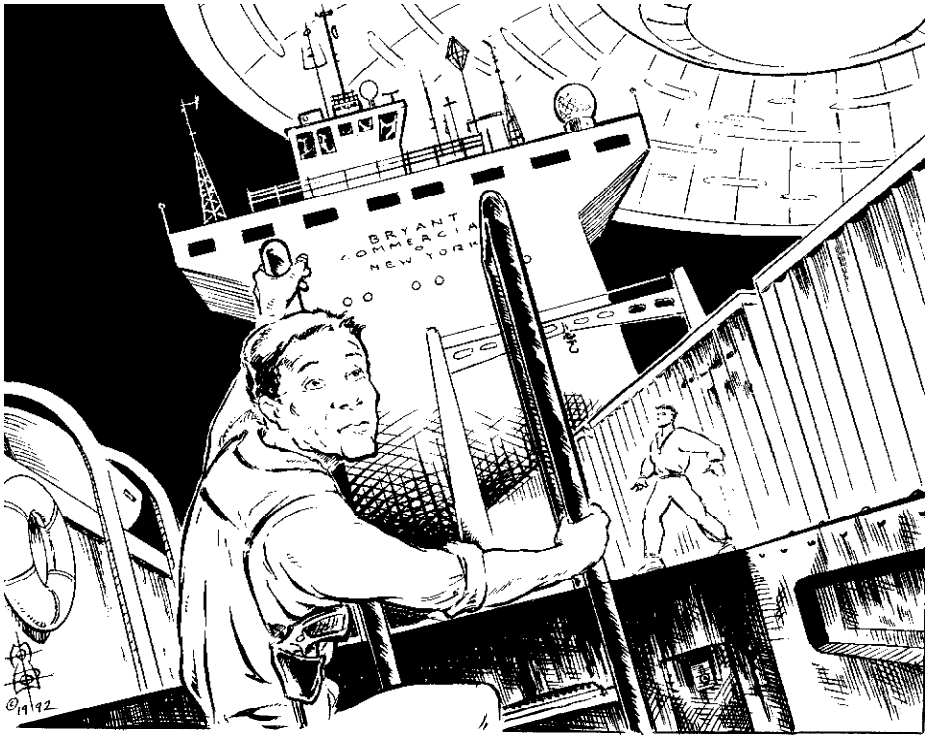
The farmer and local law-enforcement classes are the ones most likely to be used in a campaign concentrating on a rural community's efforts to survive on its own. Clergy, mechanics, and medical workers are other good local characters to use. An entire campaign could be constructed around the residents' day-to-day survival efforts (such as the farmers trying to keep their machinery going) while fighting off wild animals, Dark Minions, criminals, and corporate takeovers, not to mention the occasional storm, drought, or cloud of radioactive fallout for variety.

Other character classes may have good reasons for visiting the small towns, aside from checking on friends or relatives. A journalist could be doing a series on how America's small towns are faring in these hard new times. A trucker could be delivering supplies, as could a commercial pilot or merchant marine in some circumstances. Drifters, the homeless, and construction workers often roam about, looking for work. Environmentalists could be checking conditions, while a bounty hunter, private or government investigator, or a state or federal law-enforcement type could show up on the trail of criminals. A manager could be sent in to see if the local town has the work force and facilities for setting up a plant or warehouse.

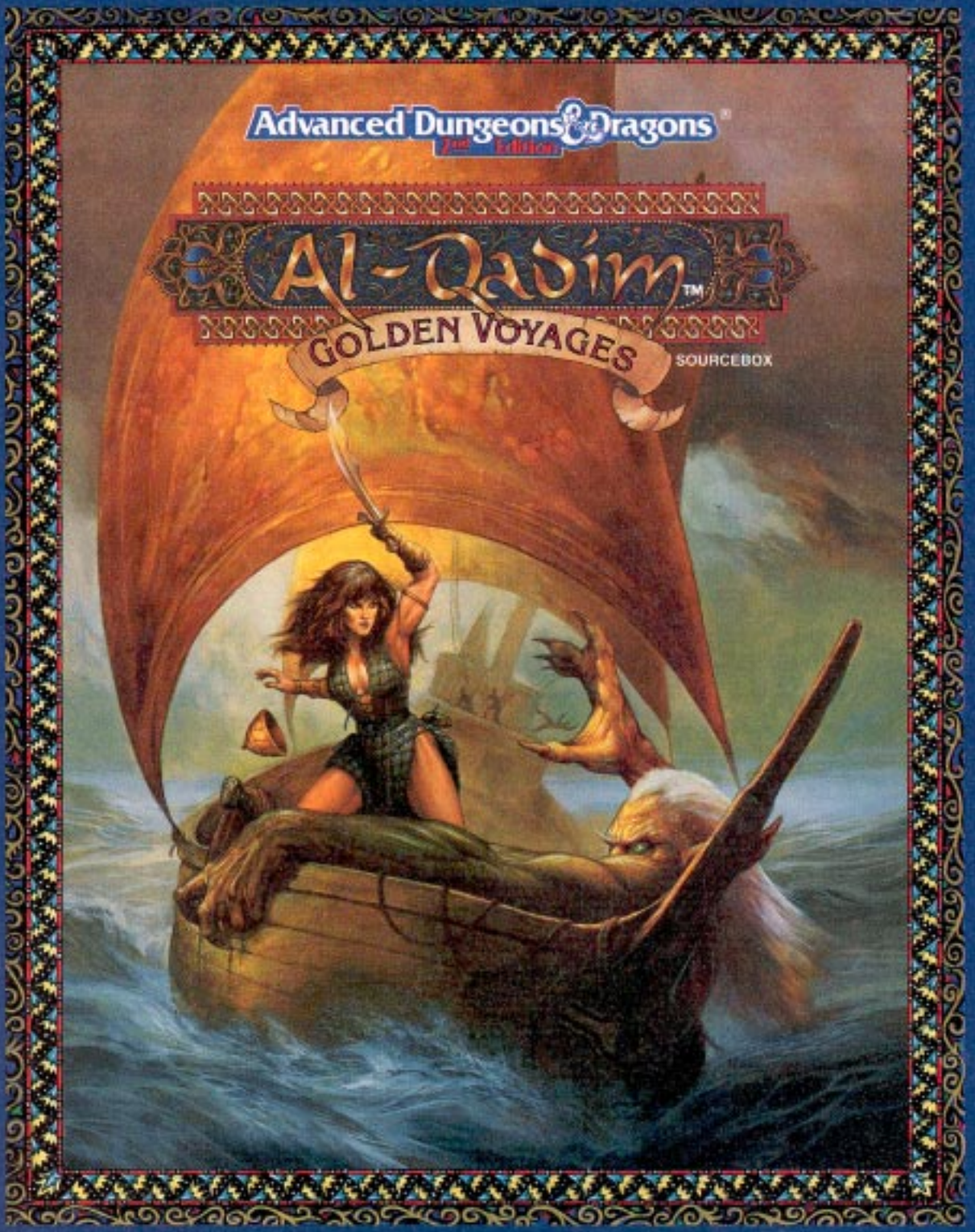
Even athletes and entertainers might tour the countryside in the DARK CONSPIRACY game's version of "Farm Aid," and politicians could do the same to show the rural folks that they are not forgotten. Celebrities need security such as bodyguards, mercenaries, martial artists, and gangers—even military or police personnel, in the case of VIPs or particularly lawless areas (like the neighbors of a Demonground area). Last, but not least, criminals and cyborg escapees could show up on the run, looking for refuge that they might not find.

If a small town or rural community is being besieged by wild animals, criminals, corporate thugs, or Dark Minions, its people will need substantial help to survive. At the very least, this means arms shipments and other supplies, thus providing employment for truckers, commercial pilots, merchant marines, and the security types who guard the supplies. With shipments of arms or machinery, a business manager might even be required to come along with his wares, to teach the locals how to handle the stuff.

In many cases, outsiders will be necessary as fighters in the front lines if the locals are not to be annihilated. Mercenaries and bodyguards are naturals here, though other fighter types such as gangers



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and martial artists can be used. Environmentalists of the DARK CONSPIRACY world are already in the habit of fighting to prevent further ravaging of the land, and the various investigator classes will be pressed into service in an emergency. In areas near Demonground, paraphysicists, professors, psychic test subjects, and mystics will be drawn to investigate; their talents will be useful against supernatural foes.

In extreme cases, to be used mainly by combat-happy players and GMs, a newly discovered resource could make the government decide the local grounds are valuable enough to fight over; a preemptive strike may even be made against the local Demonground. In either case, large-scale employment of police or military forces will be used. Anyone who saw the movie *Aliens* will know the potential for conflict inherent in such a scenario.

If you really like government and military involvement in such cases, try an adventure where the beleaguered community is a NASA or military base on the moon, or a space station. This is even more like *Aliens* than the above examples, and it provides plenty of opportunities for shooting it out with ray-gun-wielding ETs (extraterrestrials). Some Dark Minions could appear as lone, powerful extraterrestrial monsters, such as the Monster from the Id in the movie *Forbidden Planet*. (Well, if you can use tabloids to provide ideas for adventures in this game, why not SF and horror movies?)

For a novel spin, you could have a campaign that combines this category with the first one. In it, the PCs would be members of a truck convoy or the crew of a merchant ship or cargo plane, or are the military or security types guarding them. In this campaign (as opposed to a lone adventure, as suggested in the first section), the adventuring would consist of traveling all over the country and perhaps the world, delivering supplies while fighting off criminals and Dark Minions, dealing with suspicious local law officers, and adapting to local customs before lynch mobs show up. This would be the equivalent of the science-fiction campaign where the PCs pilot a spaceship as a freighter, or a campaign based on West End Games' TORG* game centered on the realm runner and profiteer character templates.

A variant on this is to form a marauding band of PC raiders (criminals and gangers) and rampage around, but the lack of a secure source of supplies and equipment, particularly guns and ammunition, does not make this a good option for a long-term campaign.

Quick-reaction force

This is another DARK CONSPIRACY game favorite, with the PCs working together as a team that runs down leads concerning the activity of the Dark Minions, and takes action against them when they appear.

Most PC teams are composed of civilian free-lancers, who can be of any class, but official forces composed of police, government agents, or military personnel could easily be created. In fact, if the real world started turning into its DARK CONSPIRACY game counterpart, you can bet that government-sponsored teams *would* be created. SWAT teams, groups of FBI agents, and military commandos on the order of the Green Berets, SEALS, SAS, and Spetsnaz would all be turned on the problem, probably long before things got as bad as they are in this game world.

Since the primary purpose of the quick-reaction team is to destroy the Dark Minions wherever they appear, the bulk of the party will be composed of fighter types, whether military personnel or civilian classes such as mercenaries, bodyguards, gangers, and martial artists. A few intellectual types such as private investigators, professors, paraphysicists, and mystics will also be along to provide the brains that direct the brawn, and the more mystical types can also fight foes that cannot be defeated by gunfire alone.

Some classes will be more involved on the fringes of this type of adventure than others. Politicians and nomenklatura are good candidates for masterminds who finance the team's efforts and give them their marching orders. Journalists and private investigators may do no more than uncover traces of the presence of Dark Minions and point the team in their direction. It is even conceivable that high-profile figures like athletes, entertainers, politicians, and members of the clergy may receive pleas for help from desperate admirers because the latter have no one else to turn to.

Fans of other horror RPGs will be most familiar with this type of adventure, as it is a standard set-up for Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU* (CoC) game. DARK CONSPIRACY game PCs with psychic powers don't have nearly the same abilities that CoC spell-casters have, but the Dark Minions aren't nearly as powerful as Cthulhu and his cohorts. In fact, DARK CONSPIRACY game players will have an easier time of it, as they have more high-tech weaponry, and the bulk of the monsters in the game are perfectly vulnerable to ordinary or modified weapons (such as ultraviolet lasers).

Explore the ruins

This adventure sounds more suited to TSR's D&,D® and AD&D® games than the DARK CONSPIRACY game, but in fact it is quite appropriate. The rulebook makes it clear that there are many ancient sites on earth where the Dark Minions can come out into the normal world. Caves, mountain peaks, and the sites of old Native American villages are all good places to investigate. In fact, the PCs could go to these places even without knowing the Dark Minions are there. A professor could lead an expedition there to do mundane research, with a heavily armed party along due to the unsettled nature of the times. This is the best type of adventure for introducing new Dark Minions based on the creatures of myth and legend.

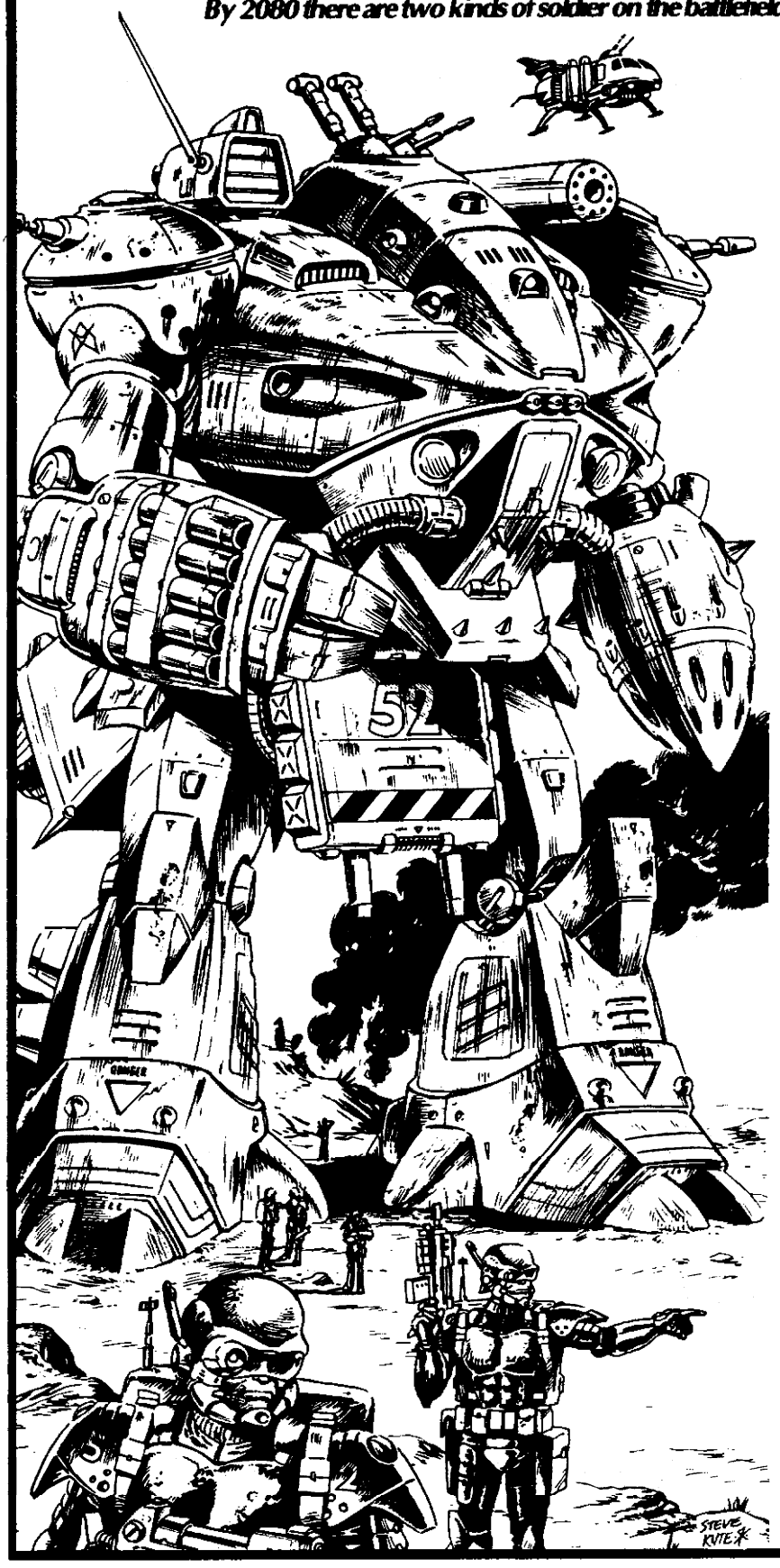
In the DARK CONSPIRACY world, of course, not all ruins are ancient. Many small towns have been abandoned, as the inhabitants have been kicked out by corporations, have abandoned the hard life and moved to the city, or were wiped out by the Dark Minions. Most of the ruins the PCs investigate will be what the rulebook refers to as the Demonground. The designated spots on the map on page 66 of the

Continued on page 86



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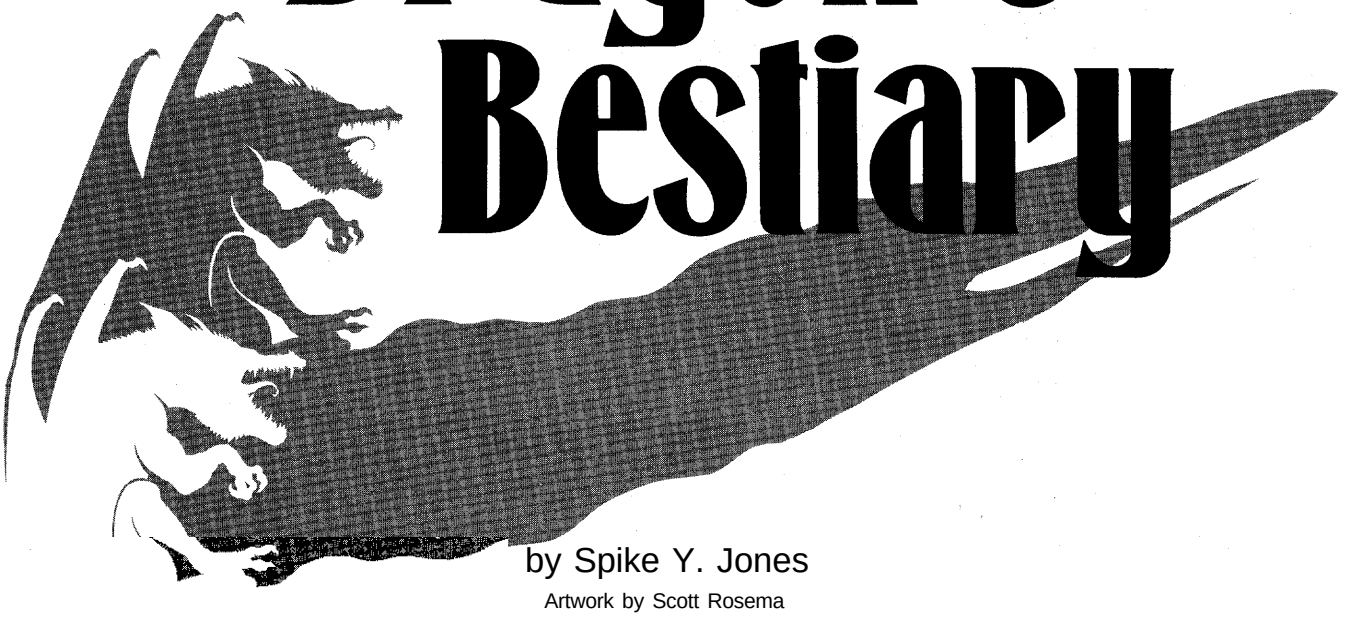
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The Dragon's Bestiary



by Spike Y. Jones

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Cariad ysbryd

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Temperate wilderness*
FREQUENCY: *Very rare*
ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*
ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*
DIET: *Nil*
INTELLIGENCE: *Exceptional (15-16)*
TREASURE TYPE: *O,R*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral good*
NO. APPEARING: *1*
ARMOR CLASS: *0*
MOVE: *18*
HIT DICE: *5*
THAC0: *15*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1-4*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Singing*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *50%*
SIZE: *M (5'-6' tall)*
MORALE: *Fanatic (17-18)*
XP VALUE: *1,400 (for neutral or evil characters only; good characters lose the same experience for slaying a cariad ysbryd)*

A cariad ysbryd, or "ghost lover," is the spirit of a decidedly good female (usually sylvan) elf who has chosen to remain among the living after death so that she may continue to perform good deeds. While technically undead, a cariad ysbryd loves all living things and harms only those who do not share her love of life. Accordingly, the only things she is capable of truly hating are other undead.

A cariad ysbryd appears in undeath just as she did in life, only more beautiful. Dressed in her finest clothes, she glows faintly and bears a serene expression even when in combat. One can hear a cariad ysbryd before one sees her, for she constantly sings a beautiful, wordless song.

Combat: A cariad ysbryd would rather prevent combat than win it, a philosophy her song enforces on her surroundings. The sound causes all intelligent creatures within hearing (50′ radius) not currently engaged in combat to make a saving throw vs. spells or become "becalmed" with feelings of peace and contentment that causes them to end all hostilities for 1-12 rounds. When the targets recover, they have to continue making saving throws every round if they remain within the area of the song's effect.

People affected by the cariad ysbryd's song will not be able to attack even if attacked. They can perform actions or employ magical items and spells in self-defense, but they cannot initiate violence while becalmed.

If a cariad ysbryd is forced into combat, she has two weapons. Her preferred weapon is her touch, which causes 1-4 hp damage to a hostile living creature (a definition not limited to those attacking the cariad ysbryd) or to undead of any disposition.

Her second weapon is a variation on her continuous song. Usable once per day, this special tune causes all evil creatures in a

30′ radius to suffer 3d6 hp damage from the frightening beauty of the song if they fail saving throws vs. death magic. The tonal changes of the song releases anyone currently becalmed by her normal song, but after this use of her voice to attack, her song returns to its normal form, and those within range must once again make saving throws against its calming power.

Unfortunately, the cariad ysbryd is loathe to use the harmful version of her song because it is linked to another of her abilities. Once per day, she can change the tone of her song so that, in addition to its calming properties, it combines the effects of *remove fear*, neutralize poison and *heal* spells on all within 30′. This power to heal or harm with her song is intimately connected; if she has used the power to harm that day, it cannot heal, and if she has used it to heal, it cannot harm. Under most circumstances, she will try to save her voice for its healing properties instead of squandering it on violence.

The worst enemy of a cariad ysbryd is her evil counterpart, the groaning spirit or banshee that is the spirit of an evil female elf. If one encounters the other, she will abandon all other activities in order to devote every effort towards destroying her opposite. When a cariad ysbryd fights a banshee, her normal song changes to a horrific shriek (entirely out of sorts with her still-serene visage), and she uses her killing song without hesitation, doing double damage to the banshee if it fails the saving throw.

A cariad ysbryd can be hit only by +1 or better weapons (or by monsters of 4+1 or more hit dice), and is immune to the effects of *charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, and cold/electricity-based spells. Unholy water splashed on them causes 1-4 hp damage, and they can be killed by a *dispel good* spell. A cariad ysbryd can be turned (but not commanded) by an evil cleric as if she were a spectre, but good clerics cannot affect one at all. Although a cariad ysbryd isn't evil, other spells that specifically target undead, such as *invisibility to undead*, have full effect.

Habitat/Society: As an undead creature, the cariad ysbryd has no society. A cariad ysbryd has no grandiose plan to make the world a better place; she is content to improve the conditions of the area she calls home, an area five miles in diameter around the spot where she died.

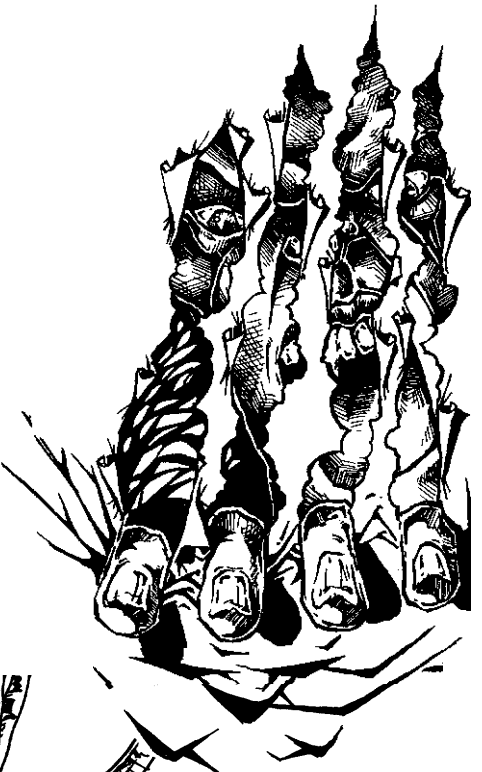
A cariad ysbryd can sense living creatures anywhere in the area she protects, and if strangers enter the area she knows of it immediately. Mere entrance to the area is not enough to force a reaction from her, but if new entrants harm any living thing within that area (including each other), or if one of them is already afflicted or wounded in some way, she makes her way to them while singing her song to halt those who may react in fear and anger, and to heal wounded people.

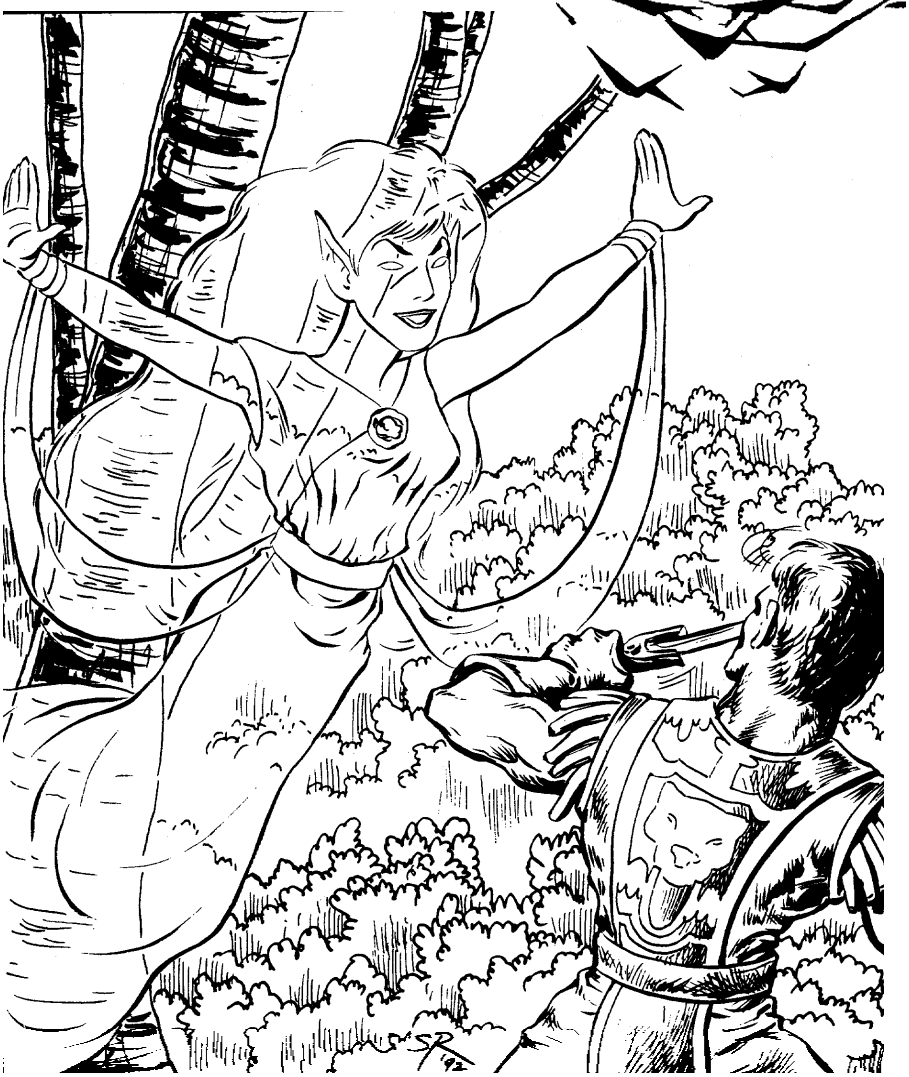
A cariad ysbryd doesn't prize treasure, but some creatures make gifts for her that she will not refuse. Thus, one will find small bags of coins, statuary, and other valuables scattered around her demesne without rhyme or reason.

Ecology: Because a cariad ysbryd's song keeps her vicinity free of the anger and evil of intelligent creatures, her lair has the appearance of an untouched wilderness, even if there are humans or other higher creatures dwelling in her area. While the natural cycle of life and death (including the violent but necessary acts of predators) still takes place there, it cannot be intruded on by the darker emotions of intelligent creatures.

Humanoids, demihumans, and men who chose to live in cariad ysbryd-maintained areas could prosper as well. The ease of living in her presence for a week or more serves as a restorative to a man's spirit. Under constant, willing exposure to a cariad ysbryd's song, intelligent creatures heal from fatigue, wounds, and illnesses at twice their normal rate.

In addition certain artists gain particular benefits from associating with a cariad ysbyrd, as her singing serves as inspiration to singers, poets and bards. Spending 1-6 months in the company of a cariad ysbyrd gives a bard a permanent bonus (equivalent to an extra level of ability) when using his voice for special effect such as inspiring his friends or countering the effects of a harpy's song.







Memento mori

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Any*
FREQUENCY: *Uncommon or very rare*
ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*
ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*
DIET: *Nil*
INTELLIGENCE: *Average (9)*
TREASURE TYPE: *See below*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
NO. APPEARING: *1*
ARMOR CLASS: *3*
MOVE: *18*
HIT DICE: *4*
THAC0: *17*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *See below*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Nil*
SIZE: *M*
MORALE: *Fearless (20)*
XP VALUE: *10 per hit die of attacking energy when encountered*

While most undead are evil parodies of life, one type of undead has an entirely different origin and purpose. A memento mori is created by a priest's spell (see below) to serve as an everlasting remembrance of a dead person, and as an ever-vigilant guardian over its body.

A memento mori takes the form of a translucent image of the deceased as it appeared when the spell that created it was cast. In extreme circumstances, this could mean that the memento mori has the horrible appearance of a mangled and partially rotted corpse, but usually the creating spell is cast only after the body has been properly readied for internment, and so the memento mori will present the appearance of a person as fine and lifelike as the skill of the funeral arranger could ensure.

Combat: A memento mori has no material body and can be hit by only magical weapons, with these doing damage equal only to their applicable pluses on hits (e.g., a *long sword +1, +2 against undead* would do two points of damage to a memento mori on a successful hit). Most spells do not affect them, except for those specifically targeting undead (such as *invisibility to undead)*, those that affect the dead (such as *raise dead*, which kills the memento mori if successful), and those that affect magical creatures (such as *dispel magic*, which causes damage equal to the caster's level).

As the memento mori is far from being the most powerful of undead, it uses intimidation to augment its combat abilities. When confronted by potential tomb-robbers, the memento mori appears in front of the body it guards and warns the robbers away from their goal. If they do not immediately flee when confronted by the memento mori, it causes a strong static-electric charge to play over all standing within 20′ of either the body or the memento mori. This charge is non-damaging, but makes the victims' hair stand on end and causes an unpleasant tingling to play across their skin. The memento mori, now surrounded by a blue nimbus of crackling electricity, then warns the intruders that worse effects are in store if they should persist.

If the thieves continue to advance, or if they attack either the memento mori or the body it protects (damaging the body won't harm its guardian, but will anger it), it attacks, being careful to avoid harming its body or treasure.

At the time of its creation, a memento mori is invested with a limited amount of energy that can be expended by touching a target with its hand. The effect is like that of the *shocking grasp* spell. For each attack, it decides how many dice of damage it will do; and upon a successful hit that amount of damage is done to the victim and is subtracted from the memento mori's total energy forever.

This energy total may be considerable. An average memento mori will have from 1-100 hit dice of energy remaining to it. Some few will have more than that, others will have used all they were provided with. As their energy level drops over time due to encounters, a memento mori tries to conserve energy wherever possible, giving opponents ample opportunity to flee and never attacking retreating robbers. Thus, while a particular memento mori might have a store of 50 hit dice of electrical energy, it would not expend this in one or two high-damage attacks. Instead, it would make a preliminary attack using only one or two dice of electricity, and after scoring a hit, would pull back and warn its opponents to leave or suffer worse. If this fails to dissuade the tomb-robbers, it will escalate the attacks while continually entreating its victims to withdraw.

As the memento mori has no purpose but to protect its body and treasures, it will not refrain from using every hit die left to it to prevent even a single attack if that is necessary. A memento mori with no remaining energy will still behave like one with damaging power, threatening potential robbers with its static charge and letting the charred remains of any previous robbers speak for themselves.

A memento mori does not differentiate between its body and its treasures, so deals threatening to endanger one in favor of preserving the other will not be accepted. If some part of the treasure is stolen,



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the memento mori will stay to protect the greater portion remaining.

If the majority of what it guards is destroyed, either by action of intelligent beings or by decay, the memento mori focuses its attention on whatever remains, even if that involves traveling to a distant land, unerringly seeking some small item of value that was stolen decades before. When it finds its treasure, it guards it wherever it happens to be, as it has no body with which to move the item.

Habitat/Society: Because of the preparations required for the ritual that creates a memento mori, they are almost never found in wilderness areas far from the place they called home in life. They are common in inhabited regions where ancestor worship, mummification, and other forms of preserving or remembering the dead are practiced, for "memento mori" means "remembrance of the dead." In these areas, no memento mori roam the streets, but are found in tombs or shrines where their bodies have been laid to rest.

The body that a memento mori guards will usually be adorned in the finest funeral garb and funerary gifts the family could afford, and it is these things that make up its treasure: anything from a few art objects and gaudy trinkets (the spell creating the memento mori is itself an expensive gift to the memory of the deceased) to a princely sum such as treasure types B or E.

As a memento mori is formed from a part of the soul of the dead body it guards, it retains the memories it possessed in life. This provides mourners with an opportunity to be comforted by speaking with the departed, and in some cultures, new generations are introduced to the memento mori of revered ancestors who died before they were born, hearing the family history from the lips of those who actually lived it. A memento mori is perfectly willing to converse with anyone, even a nonrelative, who makes no attempt to disturb its treasures or body.

Unfortunately, the memento mori has no lasting memory of events that occur after its creation, nor does it have any more personality than a video-recording would have. Thus, each encounter it has with a person, whether loving relative or avaricious tomb-robber, is treated as if it were the first such, and even if a family's tomb complex contains more than one memento mori these shades will not conduct conversations among themselves, as none has any desire or ability to benefit from discussions with equally dead souls. As a corollary, if tomb-robbers threaten the treasures of one memento mori, but stay more than 20′ from all the goods of another memento mori-protected body, the second undead will do nothing to assist its fellow, even if they were related in life.

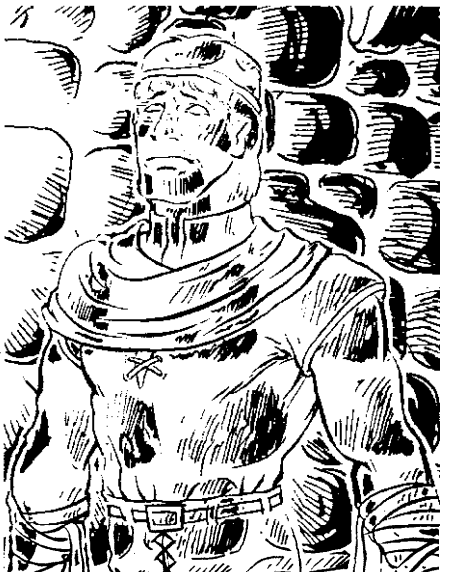
Ecology: A memento mori eats nothing, produces no byproducts, and as does not actively hunt the living, and is even further divorced from the greater ecology of the world than most evil undead.

Create memento mori (Necromantic)
Priest 3
Sphere: Necromantic
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 2 hours, plus 1 hour for every die of energy imparted
Area of Effect: Body touched
Saving Throw: See below

The casting of this spell on a dead body causes a sliver of the soul that once inhabited the body to return to the Prime Material plane and become a memento mori, standing guard over its body. Only one memento mori can be made from each person's soul, as a loss of a greater number of soul-slivers would be detrimental to the soul wherever it now rests. In addition, a memento mori cannot be created if the body of the deceased is not present, nor if the body or soul of the deceased has already been turned into some other form of undead. Unlike other spells that create undead, this use of *create memento mori* is not considered evil if, when he was alive, the person who becomes the memento mori was part of a culture believing in this practice as an accepted custom.

Each memento mori is able to cause a mild, static-electric effect that they use to defend their bodies against cowardly pests, and most are also imbued with electrical energy they can use in combat.

The material component for this spell is a collection of herbs, spices, oils, and precious substances that are placed in or about the body as it is prepared for internment. The cost of these stuffs is 500 gp, with an additional 25 gp worth of these things being required for every hit die of electrical energy the memento mori is to be imbued with (e.g., a memento mori to be imbued with two hit dice worth of energy would cost 550 gp, while 1,000 gp would produce a memento mori with 20 hit dice available to it). These oils and such are all incorporated into the body when the spell is cast and are not recoverable.



Tymher-haid

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Any inhabited*
FREQUENCY: *Rare*
ORGANIZATION: *Swarm*
ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*
DIET: *Nil*
INTELLIGENCE: *Semi- (2-3)*
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*
NO. APPEARING: *(10-100 "sparks")*
ARMOR CLASS: *3*
MOVE: *Fl 18 (A)*
HIT DICE: *See below*
THAC0: *See below*
NO.OF ATTACKS: *1*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1/10 of a point*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Immune to fire, psionics, and illusions*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Nil*
SIZE: *T (1" sparks)*
MORALE: *Steady (11)*
XP VALUE: *Half basic XP value (as per DMG, Table 31) for its hit dice*

When powerful evil people or creatures are slain, there is a chance that they will return to plague the living as undead, such as wights, spectres, and ghosts. Weaker and less evil creatures usually do not suffer this fate, but if a large number of them are killed at one time and place, and if they don't receive proper funerary rites, they may return as an exceedingly minor form of undead, called collectively a tymher-haid, or "ghost-swarm."

A tymher-haid is both beautiful and horrible to behold. The individual members appear as small, multicolored sparks in a loosely defined mass, forming a brilliant display in the air. The only thing that disturbs this image is the fact that a tymher-haid reserves its most dazzling displays for attacking any living creatures it comes across. Swooping and diving in intricate arcs, a tymher-haid gradually "stings" its victim to death.

Combat: When attacking, a tymher-haid descends on its victim like a swarm of wasps, singeing its prey with every fiery touch. A "spark" does only a tenth of a point of damage each, but the sheer number of spark stings (up to one hundred per round) will eventually overwhelm most any victim not resistant to fire. Each spark attacks by swooping down at its victim and giving it a minute burn upon contact. As it gains speed on its approach, its coloration becomes more intense and grows brighter, building up the energy it will deliver to its victim before dulling back to its normal appearance after striking. Thus, for someone not in the midst of an attack, the kaleidoscopic patterns and colors of the mass attacks are beautiful to behold.

A tymher-haid attacks as if it were a single creature, dividing the total number of sparks it contains by 10 (always rounding down) to determine its effective hit

Continued on page 84

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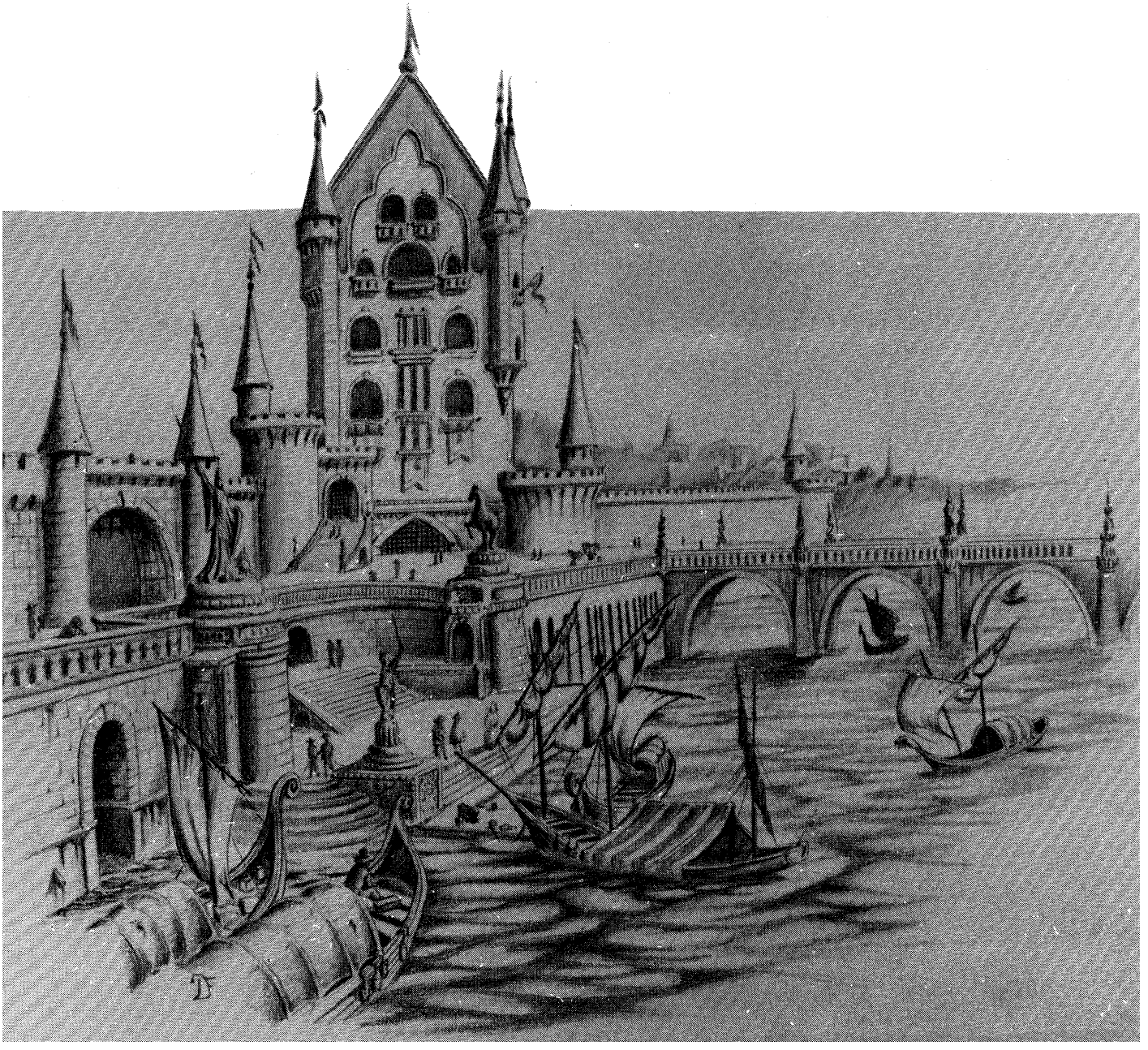
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Welcome to the

Unusual areas within an AD&D® campaign city

by James R. Collier

Artwork by Dan Frazier



Neighborhood!

Inns and shops. Inns and shops. I'm so tired of inns and shops. Between dungeon expeditions, your PCs go to town. There, they stay at the inn, sell their treasures at a shop, buy supplies at a shop, and go to an inn where they meet a stranger. . . . I'm so, so tired of inns and shops.

Even a medieval city can cover several square miles. There's enough space for trade streets, cubbyholes, libraries, and mausoleums. A human city will have a section where sizable populations of elves live among their own kind, according to their tastes. Similarly, humans will have their section in an elven metropolis. The poor will be separated from the rich, the caravan yards from the candle shops.

This article explores different areas of a campaign city, and details how adding these neighborhoods to an urban campaign can enliven adventures. Many parts of a medieval fantasy city have been covered in detail in other articles, so I won't bore you by describing the thieves' guildhouse, any local inns, or the king's castle.

The old quarter

Like the Casbah in Casablanca and the Maze in Sanctuary, some cities have areas that the law has abandoned. Here, thieves come and go, fence their loot, and make their sordid deals. Think of it as a guildhall that covers several square blocks, full of narrow, winding streets and alleys, small hole-in-the-wall shops, dirt, smells, and burned-out buildings. Suspicious characters are always hanging around, and the occasional furtive stranger can be seen skulking to a meeting.

Thieves are not alone in calling the old quarter home—the poor, the homeless, and the useless also live here. This is the slum of an AD&D game worlds city. Beggars come to its alleys after a day of cadging alms in better neighborhoods. Runaway slaves, criminals, and those who fear for their lives never leave the area.

There are several reasons that characters might visit the old quarter. If a thief character wishes to dispose of stolen items, this is the place. In addition, the only moneychangers who might accept coins from a hostile nation will be found here. Poisons and cursed items can be bought and sold here. (A person wishing to acquire a cursed item to give to an enemy would not go to a legitimate businessman.) A character looking for an item stolen from him could check the various shops. In fact, characters can find just about anything they want if they look long enough and are willing to pay handsomely for it.

Characters who look will find an endless supply of small shops, secreted in ruined or dilapidated buildings. Eighty percent of these are fences, carrying small supplies of stolen or illegal items. The other 20% are trash dealers, those who have sorted through the garbage of the city's rich for items to sell to the city's poor. Wares include rags, bent or broken items that have been mended partially, bits of wood or metal such as rusty nails, and barely edible food.

The character wanting to find a hard-to-locate person also would search this area. Assassins, specialist thieves, spies, informants, and smugglers all live, work, or meet here, and any character who wishes to employ such a person seeks him here. Wizards on the run, fighters in hiding, and priests of a forbidden sect will all be found in the old quarter.

The necropolis

This area may also be called the "catacombs" or the "city of the dead." It is an underground cemetery, covering several blocks, consisting of tunnels lined with niches and the occasional crypt. It is here that the dead live.

Many kinds of undead could reasonably function within a city. A lich, especially one who only recently achieved such status, might want to continue his contact with society. After all, what good is immortality if you can't enjoy it? A necropolis could contain a powerful lich served by zombies, blackmailing influential citizens with the threat of their becoming part of his personal staff after death.

A vampire, too, might prefer to work within society, performing assassinations to earn his daily blood, and making himself useful enough to certain people so as to shift the attentions of the local paladins elsewhere. A crypt might turn out to be well furnished and almost homey if it weren't for the skeletal servants, lack of mirrors, and an undead owner.

Other potential residents of lesser importance include wererats, competing with the vampire for control of the local rats; carrion crawlers and other scavengers; lesser undead; and minor vermin. Wealthy families might take precautions against grave robbers, both living and undead, with such things as golems, guardian daemons, and rot grubs.

Believe it or not, there are reasons that characters might want to visit the catacombs, other than to clean it out.

Clerics who know the *speak with dead* spell can save themselves the cost of a sage by consulting a recently dead expert on the subject, or even a long-dead expert if the priest is of sufficiently high level.

Mages, fighters, and rogues cannot speak with the dead normally, but they might be able to speak with undead, if they knew the creature in life, and if it retains the same fondness (or fear) for the characters that it did formerly.

Particularly brave characters might take advantage of certain long-range possibilities. A lich could guard your treasure forever, for example, and do it much better than a bank!

Ethnic neighborhoods

Any city that has a large group of nonhumans living nearby can expect to have a conclave of them within the city. Not only demihumans but humanoids who want or need to deal with the city dwellers will have small neighborhoods of their own. The buildings may be of human design at times, but there will be distinctive signs to those able to recognize them, revealing who lives in them.

Halflings

Halfling neighborhoods tend to be found away from the bustle of commerce and industry, and surrounded by human, elf, or dwarf settlements. Halfling neighborhoods can be recognized by their kept gardens and swept streets. Litter is carefully picked up. Children's laughter is common here, and there always seems to be a party going on. Houses clump close together, with narrow alleys weaving between them. A careful ear will detect scurrying within them whenever a stranger approaches; halflings take their security seriously, especially when surrounded by nonhalflings. Law is enforced by halfling sheriffs, with perhaps a squad of humans or dwarves on hand for the rough customers. Incidents are handled as quietly as possible.

Characters will find the small shops in

the area useful. They stock everyday items, groceries, and common things that an adventurer might use. The alehouses are friendly, once you become a regular, and they are as clean and quiet as any you will find.

Elves

Elven neighborhoods tend to be scattered; a block here, a block there. They often congregate near parks and city gates; the former due to their beauty, the latter so that they can come and go as they wish.

Elves are absentee landlords. They prefer the forest and consider their city dwellings to be vacation cottages. Being excellent long-range planners, elves often buy up land in advance of city expansion, so a search of the records will show that they own much of the city's property. They usually make sure that their neighborhoods have a lot of park land and quiet or like-minded neighbors.

Elven houses are elaborately decorated, with carvings, statues, and murals, as appropriate to a people who can spend centuries on "fixer-uppers." Most yards have one or more large trees. Soft music seems to come from everywhere.

Elves conduct their affairs in the marketplace. Their homes are for relaxing. There are no shops or taverns in the area. Small grassy lots serve as meeting areas, and infrequent parties will be held there, too.

Characters willing to keep the noise down find one excellent reason to visit. Elves love to sing songs and tell stories, especially about magic, unusual creatures, and exotic treasures. A careful listener may save himself the price of a sage, and receive a good meal to boot.

Dwarves

Dwarves are clannish and stick to their own. Their neighborhoods often adjoin the blacksmith's street, and grow as necessary. (Dwarves plan over long periods and tend to be wealthier than elves).

Dwarven neighborhoods feature all-stone buildings, built to last, with wooden shingles replaced by those of slate. Clever ironwork in the form of decorations, gates, and fences show up here and there. All buildings are tightly locked when no one is at home, and elaborate security devices are the rule. Noise levels high, even at home, as dwarves are always working. They are also thrifty, they do not litter, and any garbage brought in is collected and recycled. Watchmen patrol the neighborhood day and night, and the law, both civil and dwarven, is meticulously enforced.

Outsiders are unwelcome in this neighborhood. Characters find the few stores are run by suspicious clerks who are deliberately unhelpful. They sell only things like groceries, and tell those looking for mail or axes to go to the blacksmith's street.

On the other hand, dwarves and known friends of dwarves will find the area a safe sanctuary. Assassins and thieves think twice about invading dwarven territory. The moneychangers are scrupulously fair, and the local banks are always safe places for the character's valuables, whatever his alignment.

Gnomes

Like elves, gnomes like to live in the outdoors, and buy city houses as long-term investments, insurance in case of invasions and as places of business. There will be several little neighborhoods, broken down into shop neighborhoods and trade neighborhoods.

Gnome shops are two-story buildings, with the shopkeeper living over the shop. They can be found on or near streets that specialize in jewelry, gold and silverwork, and art objects. Although decorated by gnomes, they usually aren't constructed by them, and as a result are less gnomish in appearance than true gnome dwellings.

Gnomish trade neighborhoods, where masons, troubleshooters, and stonecarvers live, abound with small wooden houses and small mammals. Lawns appear overgrown at first, but careful examination will show that they have been elaborately trimmed and evened. Bird and animal feeders, all carefully built and decorated, can be found in most yards.

Gnomes make good neighbors. In either type of neighborhood, laughter will be the most common sound during the day, and song during the night. Laws are tempered with justice, and certain mild behavior might be winked at. Nonetheless, violence and crime are not tolerated, and the multi-classed illusionists in the local watchs' ranks make gnomish neighborhoods the only ones with invisible cops.

Characters who wish to buy or sell jewelry should go to gnomish shops first. Prices are good, quality is better, and the owners are friendly. Gnomes are also famous for their "little curio shops": something like a fence's shop, but legal. Here a character might find gimmicks like a stone with *continual light* or *magic mouth* cast on it.

Hobgoblins

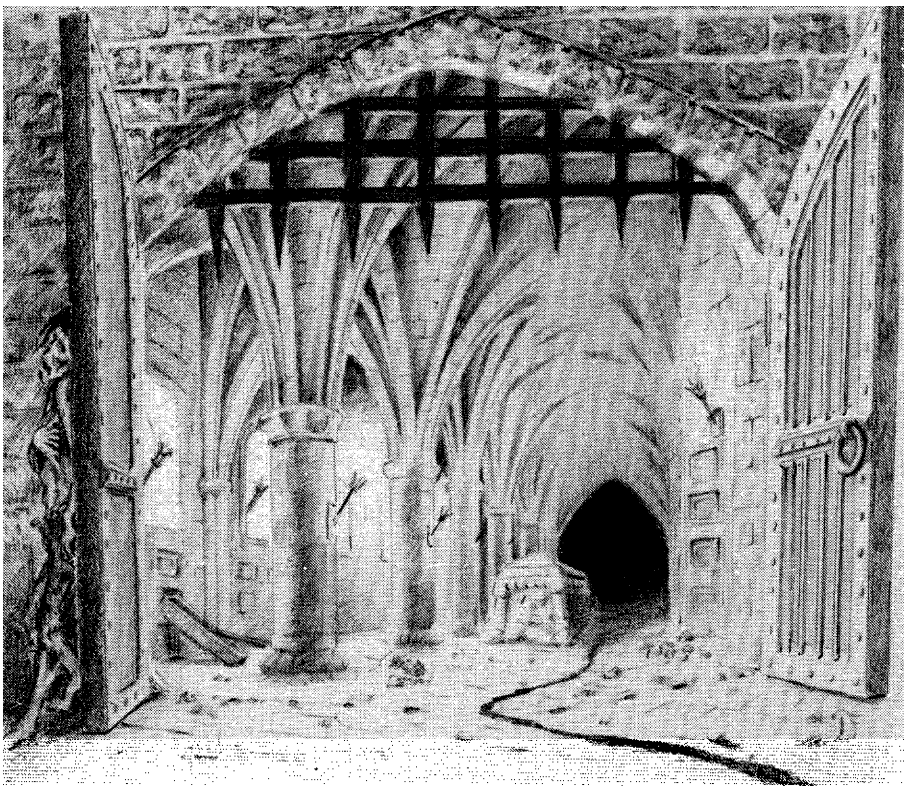
Hobgoblins will live anywhere, if there's profit in it. They tend to be miners or mercenaries, although many trade in slaves or captured loot. They tend to live near the old quarter, the barracks (detailed later), or the slave market, if there is one. They will not be found near demi-human neighborhoods.

Hobgoblin neighborhoods are free of growing things. Roads and yards are paved in stones. Although not swept like halfling neighborhoods, their streets are free clean of litter. They live in row houses, like barracks. The watch is always in evidence, marching in perfect step, and criminals are shown no mercy.

Their houses are geometrically centered in their lots, which in turn are equal in size, down to the inch. Each house and yard is walled in, like a small fortress.

Hobgoblin neighborhoods are quiet. There are neither stores nor taverns in the area. Hobgoblins drink in each other's homes and get food from the food markets. Females and children seldom leave their dwellings while in the city.

There are two reasons characters might visit a hobgoblin neighborhood. One is to hire help. Guards are always available for hire; even non-mercenaries will hire on as



fighters, if the right offer comes along. Weaker hobgoblins perform manual labor for less pay than humans or demihumans.

The other reason is trade. A lot of races make things better than hobgoblins do; dwarves make better weapons, humans better magic, and so on. Only in a city can the hobgoblins expect to obtain these things without fighting their owners to the death. As a result, party members can trade virtually anything here, even things that other shopkeepers won't touch. Barter is more common than cash sales, but at least the goods are better than those in the old quarter.

Goblins

Like hobgoblins, goblins may be found living in a human city in small numbers. They congregate in small areas, all too aware of the hatred many of their neighbors feel for them. Goblins are too wary of humans and demihumans to stay in human cities for long though, even as mercenaries. They are transients, come to trade their slaves or sell their swords. Their neighborhoods, reflecting this, are found near a city gate, beside the barracks and near the slave market, and always downwind.

Goblin communities are slums as far as humans are concerned. Filth and garbage is everywhere, and there is a terrible stench. Dwellings, such as they are, are mostly underground, with little hovels on top. A small yard surrounds each dwelling, but its size changes with the importance of its owner. A goblin trader who loses out in a business deal will find half his yard claimed by his neighbors the next day.

Manual laborers are about the only things that characters should come looking for in these communities, other than trouble.

Orcs

Orcs congregate in the same areas where hobgoblins live. In addition to the reasons hobgoblins live in cities, orcs whose tribes have been all but wiped out also live there, in order to escape tribal feuds.

Orc. neighborhoods give the impression of being chaotic, despite their alignment. Houses are surrounded by fenced-in yards, the size of which varies with the status of the owner. Neighbors on the edge of orc neighborhoods are always involved in property disputes, since orcs are always trying to encroach on other lots. Garbage is disposed of by throwing it into the yard of a weaker orc. Grass grows tall and conceals traps and pits designed to keep out intruders. At any given time there will be 1-3 fights going on, with appropriate yelling and cheering from the spectators. The city watch is noticeable by its absence, often having been bribed to watch elsewhere.

Characters looking for a cheap spellcaster might look up an orc witch doctor. The rare one that lives in a city will dispense low-level spells, poisons, and other concoctions for a fee. Furs and other natural materials are also available here at cut-rate prices; other than humans, orcs are the only large-scale, for-profit hunters.

Others

A few other races also may reside within the city in their own special neighborhoods. Aquatic creatures, such as mermen and locathah, may maintain small communities in the harbor of a trading port. Advanced lizard men, selkies, and advanced bullywugs bringing trade goods to markets would stay in huts outside the city wall.

Many monsters are listed as living in secret among men, such as kenku, yuan-ti and wererats. Their communities are usually under the city, made up of tunnels and rooms burrowed a few yards under the surface. Entrances will be hidden, or in remote and unsavory places such as dark alleys, garbage pits, cellars, and ruined buildings.

Trade streets

Even in today's cities, there are streets dedicated to a particular trade or activity-Wall Street, for example, or Broadway. A campaign city will have many streets specializing in meat, cloth, magic, weaponry, and metalworking, both of precious and of common metals. The DM™ might want to make up street names of his own, such as The Shambles, Goldsmiths Row, or The Spicery (these names were used in real medieval cities).

A description of different streets would be superfluous, but it should be kept in mind that specializing will only go so far. Only a town famous for its weapons would have a Warrior's Row separate from Blacksmiths Street, and only a city of chandlers would have a Candle Street separate from the Market.

The caravan yards

The caravan yards are also called a trade street or area. These are large fields, usually fenced in, where beasts of burden are laden with goods destined for other cities. Warehouses and stables surround the yards, each owned by a different merchant house.

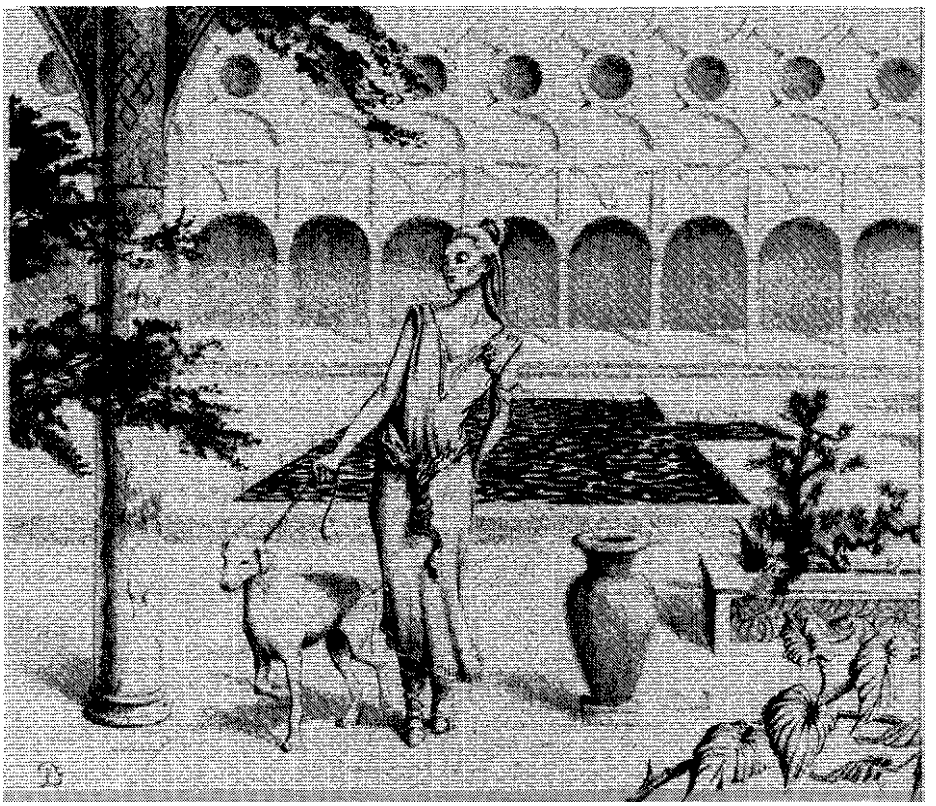
Beasts are not the only thing housed here; wagons and carriages are also housed. Regular runs may be made between certain cities, carrying passengers, messages, and goods.

In a fantasy world, beasts of burden are not restricted to mules and camels. Flying caravans may be possible, using enlarged homing pigeons, *carpets of flying*, rocs, hippogriffs, or even subdued dragons. After all, somebody must have bought those dragon eggs, right? Each type of beast of burden will have its own yard, but only trade centers will have more than three yards.

Swimming creatures also can be used for caravans, either by mermen or other sea dwellers, or by land dwellers with the means for lengthy water breathing.

The docks

The docks also fall under this heading. Each wharf will have a separate owner, and thus a separate specialty. One may belong to a consortium of cloth merchants, and the ships that tie up at this dock unload bales of cloth and clothing,



dyes, raw wool, and similar cargoes. Another wharf may specialize in spices; yet another in animals.

Both caravan yards and dockyards will be subject to theft, smuggling, and press gangs. Characters who want anything the authorities consider illegal should look here first. With fewer hands to pass through, there is a better chance of getting large quantities (relatively speaking) for lower prices. In addition, little things like a tuft of wool or a button are easier to acquire here, since they are available in such large quantities that small losses are difficult to notice and invariably expected.

On a more honest note, characters who want a large quantity of some particular item also will want to look here. Once split up among the various stores, merchandise becomes fiendishly expensive to buy, and shopkeepers seldom sell their entire stock of an item to one customer. Caravansaries, though, always do.

Big buildings

This group includes institutions that are neighborhoods in themselves. Colleges, for instance, often span blocks and are made up of several buildings. Guildhouses, especially those of large and powerful guilds, take up their own block. Temple complexes may consist of as many as 20 buildings. Large organizations like mercenary companies, chivalric orders, and merchant houses all maintain large complexes.

All these buildings and complexes can be found randomly scattered about the city, with a few exceptions. A city based on one of them, such as a religious center, a university town, or a capital, will have the appropriate complex (temple, college, castle) in the center of town, with a few smaller buildings here and there.

The character who has a major project, requiring many craftsmen—building a castle, for example—will come to one of these places to do his hiring. Special jobs, like reproducing a captured gnomish steam-powered catapult, or strange jobs, like analyzing wood from another plane of existence, also require the massive amounts of help that only these complexes can provide.

Barracks

A city can be considered lawful neutral in alignment: If the law is obeyed, an activity is considered acceptable. For this reason, a city might employ mercenaries that most humans of good alignments would not associate with. In fact, many racial enemies of mankind might be employed just for that very reason: They will not hesitate to enforce the law, and they will show no favoritism or mercy to any group. These mercenary guards will live in the barracks.

This area will take different forms in different cities. It might be a central citadel, surrounding and protecting the rulers of the city. It could be the various gatehouses and arsenals, or the small stronghouses of the city watch.

In any case, the barracks are often unsafe for adventurers or casual intruders. Most of their inhabitants will have no use for humans and will slay anyone whose death they can justify.

These mercenaries may supplement their wages by extorting money from those leaving or entering the city, by selling protection, and by hiring out as bodyguards. There may be special groups chosen for special jobs, as well-putting out fires, for instance. These groups will be very close-knit and even more likely to extort money.

Nonetheless, there are good reasons to get to know the barracks and those who live there. In the first place, where else are you going to hire 50 pikemen?

A few friendly contacts, such as warriors who can claim friendships within the outfit or who used to be members, can be used to the party's advantage. Once these contacts have been established, the party will find few places unsafe in the city. They will be told all the best places to sleep, to eat, to buy, and to sell. Their friends can be counted on to "lean on" anyone the characters want leaned on.

There are no safer hiding places than the barracks if the soldiers are on your side. They also make great banks; few people rob soldiers. For a few spare coins, soldiers are instant bodyguards for special jobs, expert hirelings in their fields, or witnesses for an alibi.

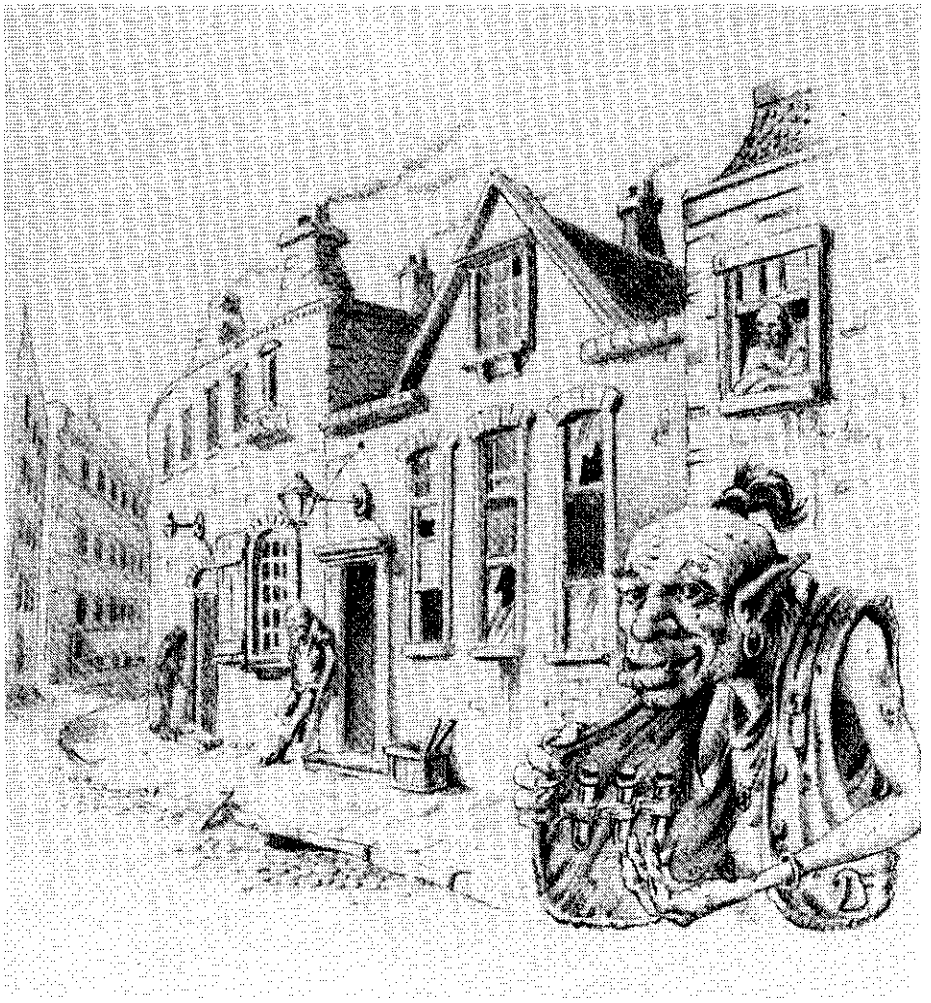
Soldiers are great gamblers: A clever thief who doesn't win too much can supplement his income here. Excess weapons can be disposed of quickly and quietly, and an old veteran may know more about the history of a magical sword than 10 bards.

In addition, magical weapons may be made available, as well. A well-connected warrior could get the loan of a sword +2 for use against a creature unaffected by normal weapons, if he is willing to repay the watch later.

Citadel

There is always an area of last resort within a city, where the rulers and army can make a last stand. This edifice is a major castle in its own right, supplied and often manned as such. In peacetime, this citadel is used as a prison, an arsenal, a vault for state treasures, or perhaps even as a hotel for visiting dignitaries.

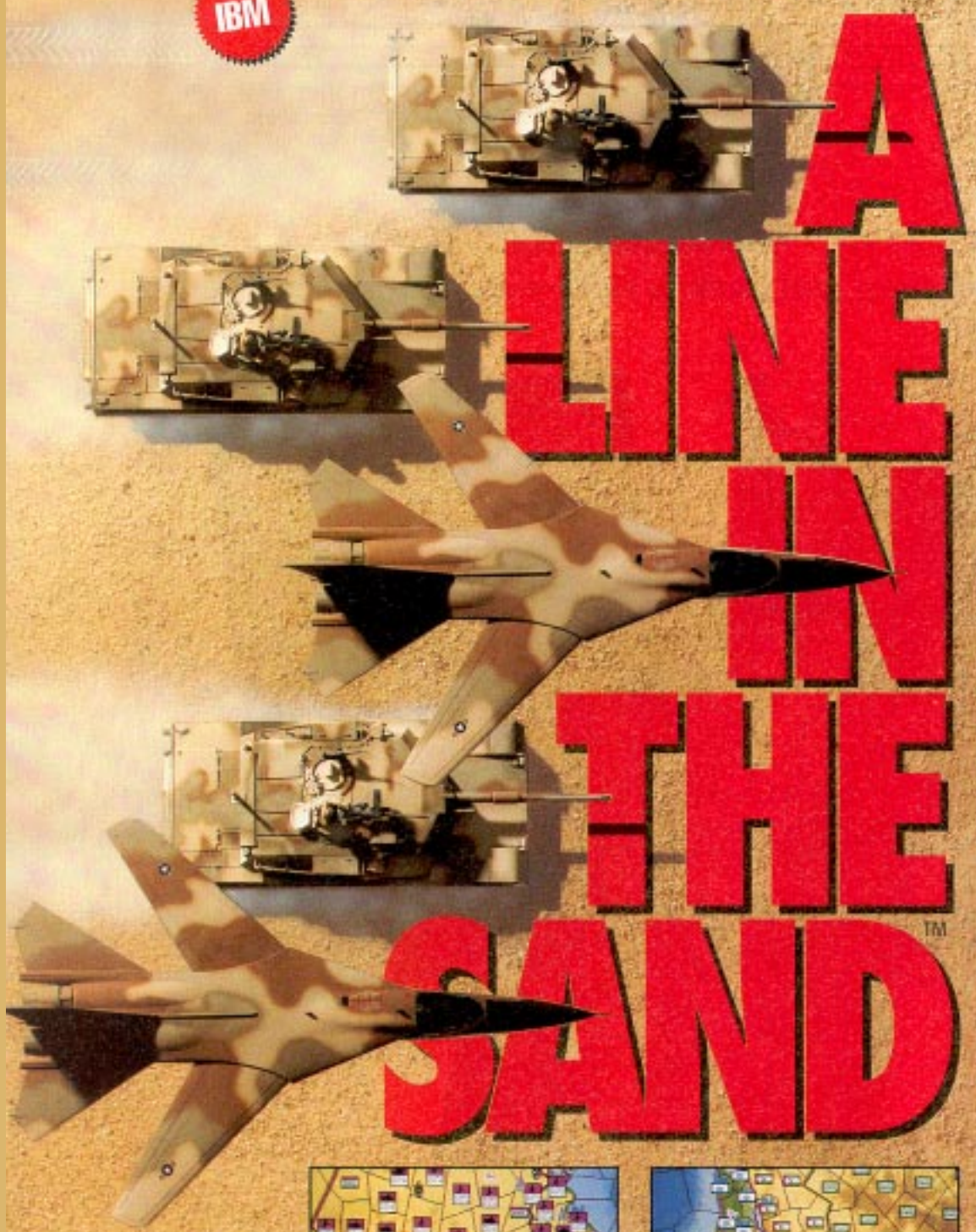
The characters might make the acquaintance of this structure for many reasons. A person they need to see might be staying within, either as guest or as prisoner. The characters themselves might be prisoners. If the party has been "officially" relieved



Continued on page 68

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A historical scenario showing Coalition Forces preparing to invade Iraq and liberate Kuwait



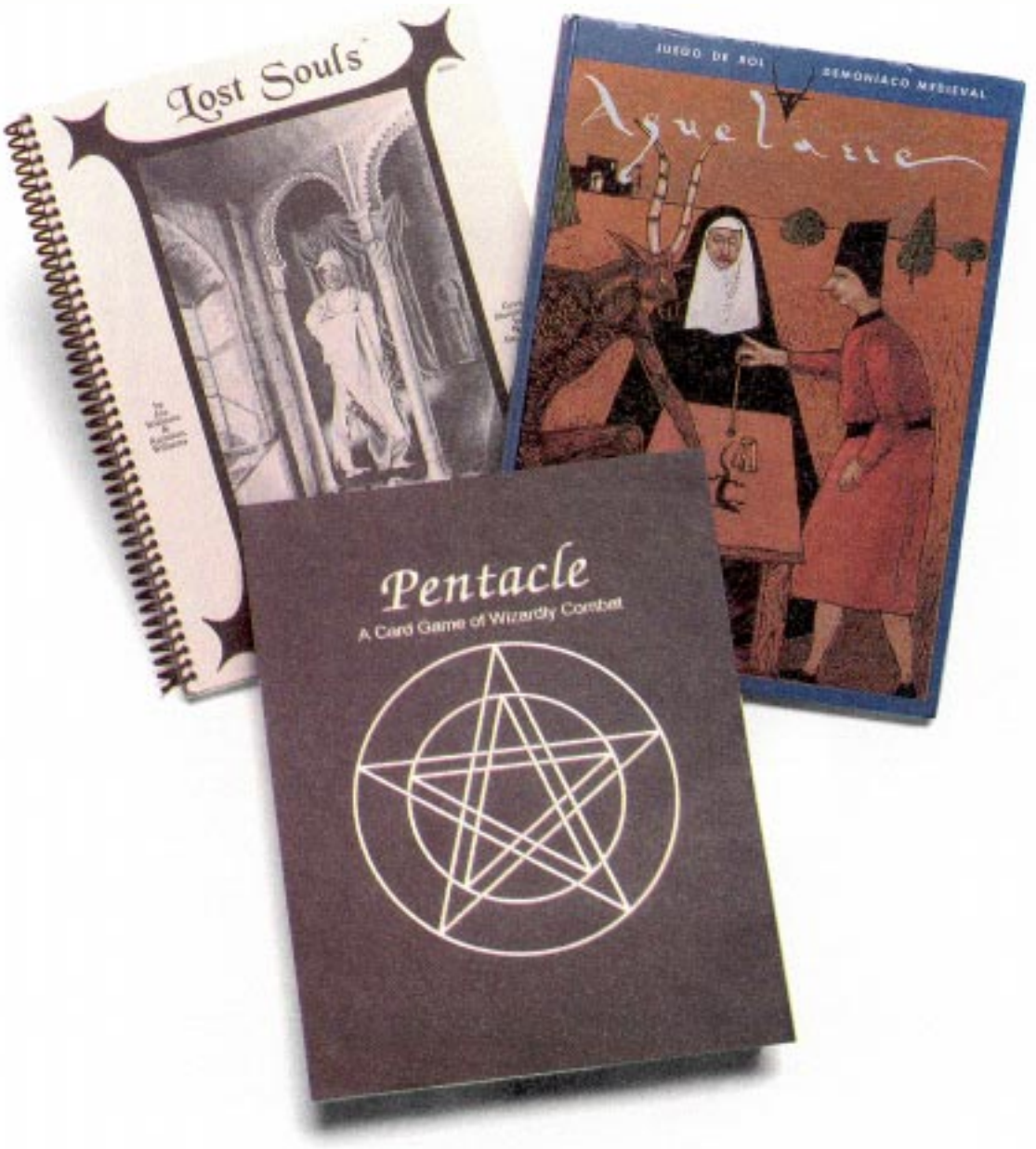
The diplomatic situation in the hypothetical "Holy War" scenario.

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Role-playing reviews I

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Spirits bright and dark: a Halloween game parade



There is an old joke that goes, "There are two kinds of people in this world: those who believe that there are two kinds of people, and those who don't." To my mind, not only is that line a clever word play, but it also reflects an essential tension we're caught in as humans. That is, definitions and characterizations are incredibly useful things, but in using them we run the risk of stereotyping, mistaking the image we've built for the object that image represents, and so becoming blind to other possibilities.

With that danger in mind, I'd nonetheless like to make a "two kinds" division of garmers for the moment. There are lots of such divisions possible: role-players and board gamers, science-fiction fans and fantasy fans, "cinematic" players and "realistic" players, or lovers of detail and lovers of simplicity, just to name a few. For my present purposes, I'd like to propose a slightly different pairing. The first type consists of those who fall in love with an individual game, collect everything written about it, and play it nearly to the exclusion of all others. The second type consists of those who play a smorgasbord of games, moving regularly from theme to theme and genre to genre.

I'm definitely of the latter sort. While there are certain favorite games that I return to with some regularity, I enjoy the sense of discovery that comes from trying new things, and that has an effect on how I write reviews. I'm not looking for the one perfect game of games to tell you about. Rather, I wish to point out particularly interesting "dishes" from the selection available to us these days (particularly those that are typically overlooked), discuss the elements that give each its "flavor," and consider whether or not the end result is satisfying, and to what degree.

For this issue, then, I've selected a truly unique horror role-playing game, a foreign fantasy role-playing game that would be sure to horrify many Americans, and an American card game that will horrify as well. Together, these games may reveal something about us as players and about our attitudes toward monsters and the supernatural.

LOST SOULS* game

120-page Rule Book
Marquee Press $12.95
Design: Joe Williams and Kathleen Williams
Cover: Rob Alexander
Interior Art: Treasury of Fantastic and Mythological Creatures (Richard Huber)

There is a particular scene in a movie called *The Lady in White* that gives me the shivers. In it, a young boy is locked in a grade-school cloakroom overnight, where he secretly witnesses the ghost of a little girl reenacting her murder. She enters the cloakroom through the locked door, her lips moving in a silent conversation with an unseen figure (the murderer is still alive during the boy's vision). Moments later, she struggles with unseen hands choking out her life, finally to fall lifeless to the floor. The effect thus far is decidedly eerie, but when her limp body rises and is "carried" back through the door, I break out in goose flesh. By the same token, I get a pleasurable chill when, in the film Ghost, the subway haunt knocks newspapers from subway riders' hands, and when Sam (as a spirit) writes "BOO" in the steam of a bathroom mirror, frightening the wits out of the man who killed him.

That sort of haunting is exactly the theme of the LOST SOULS game. In this game, players take the roles of people who have died before their time, then have come back to take care of unfinished business. The problem is, being made of ectoplasm, the PCs can't physically affect the world of the living. Fortunately, they each have special ghostly powers that allow them to interact with it.

The LOST SOULS game is packaged as a spiral-bound book, a format that makes it very easy to use but is certain to make it less visible on most store shelves. It is done entirely in black and white, even the cover. Surprisingly enough, that's not immediately obvious, as the black and white motif—even the cover illustration—suits the ghostly subject so well. Only two interior illustrations are in the entire book: a pair of small clip art ghosts on the title page, and a reproduction of a medieval-looking carving of Death on page 104. One page is devoted to maps for the sample adventure included. Again, this scarcity of illustrations is not something that draws attention to itself, largely because the books text is laid out quite attractively in two-column format, with large, airy type and a clear hierarchy of headings.

In terms of textual content, the LOST SOULS game is an odd but ultimately appealing mixture of both serious and humorous material. The broadest example of this is revealed in comparing character generation to actual play: Character creation is riotously funny, with serious undertones; actual play is seriously horrific, with moments of comic relief.

Character creation: Character creation in this game is fast enough to provide characters within a few minutes, yet detailed enough to make those characters distinctive. To generate a LOST SOULS character, you first choose or roll for background details of sex, heritage, age, height, weight, eye color, hair color, hair style, a distinctive feature, and two personality traits. This is fairly straightforward, though strict random rolls can of course result in some unworkable combinations (e.g., Chinese with amber eyes and blond dreadlocks). The distinctive feature and personality traits, in particular, provide individuality.

Next, you choose or roll for the profession your character had in life. (There are only 10 professions given, and each is fairly stereotypical, but together they cover a fairly broad range of vocations. People who wish to play characters outside that range will have to extrapolate from those provided.) The profession chosen defines the character's initial Power, base rating for each Base Skill (to which a die roll will be added for variety), a list of Specialties, and basic gear (ectoplasmic replicas of real things the characters had in life). Powers are special skills with limited uses per day, such as Intuition for the Average Joe/Josie and Mythic Reference for the Arcane Scholar. Base Skills are what most role-playing games would call attributes, and each is given on the character sheet with four related secondary skills. Specialties are those secondary skills a profession ranks as equal in numerical value to their related Base Skills. All nonspecialties are at half the related Base Skill rating. Suffice it to say, then, that the Profession chosen determines those skills with which a character is strong or weak. Similarly, the gear a character begins with is appropriate to the Profession. Each Profession also has its own Cause of Death table, which is where the hilarity of character creation begins; causes of death include such things as "Average Joe/Josie: Dropped radio into bathtub while soaking," "Explorer: Run over by bus while looking for a post office," and "Guinea Pig: Carried white flag towards menacing robot." Each death type is also listed with its own Specialties (typically ironic, such as the aforementioned Explorer gaining Dodge and Memory) and gear, further fleshing out the character.

Players next generate their characters' backgrounds. Beginning Karma is marked (all characters begin with one point, sufficient for reincarnation as pond scum), and Defense is calculated. Four interests (hobbies, etc.) are chosen or rolled for, yielding further Specialties. Then players choose or roll for ghost type. There are 21 different types of ghosts in this game, plus five types of mediums (for those who'd rather play the living), each with an additional two Specialties and a collection of distinctive Powers. The Powers are evocative, from the Banshee's Shriek, to the Specter's Charnel Breath, to the Phantasm's Hallucination. (At this point, players begin to get really excited about what their particular characters can do.) Also, the game contains concise yet evocative descriptions of each ghost type and power, so players know what their ghost types are like and are primed to play them.

Finally, players make six rolls on the Life & Death tables to generate details of their characters' histories and pieces of business left unfinished. Again, the results range from the silly (e.g., a pet hamster was left to cruel children, or a desire for a last date with the Polanski twins) to serious, fearful subjects, such as the need to save your children from their sadistic guardian.

Game play: The ghostly Powers point

the way toward the serious horror of play, and the sample adventure provided demonstrates it quite effectively. In this adventure, the central player character is an Average Joe who was electrocuted in the bathtub by a dropped radio, but the radio didn't merely fall—it was tossed in by the character's wife. Now, the character must leave Limbo and go back to Earth to solve the mystery of why she would do such a thing. The other characters go along as volunteers, hoping to gain Karma as a result. While the adventure is fairly straightforward for the referee, it holds lots of horrific surprises for the players, and lots of chances to use their ghostly Powers. Because each ghost type has different powers, with limited duration and number of uses per day, and because the material world is otherwise so immune to ghostly manipulation, the players are driven to cooperate not merely to accomplish their goals but even for survival.

For example, the characters begin play in the motel room where the central character died. Their first problem is in figuring out how to go anywhere else, as their ectoplasmic bodies can't even open the outside door—a ghostly Power must be used. Next, they find that travel anywhere is troublesome: They can walk, hoping to get where they need to go before the sun rises and boils them away; or they can use a ghostly Power to hitch a ride on some material conveyance, being careful to avoid being stepped on, sat upon, or otherwise injured by the oblivious living. Haunting the living can be great fun, but it typically yields terrified flight rather than any sort of aid.

In my own play, the characters' first use of a ghostly Power was to frighten the wits out of the motel room's latest tenant—but they were severely burned when she fled outside, leaving the door standing open with sunlight streaming in. Their second Power use was to close the door Telekinetically, so that they could safely come out from the shadow beneath the bed. After the sun had set, a Doppelganger used a Power to take physical form as a wolf, then wrestled the door handle with her mouth so that they could get outside. Rather than plod on foot to find the place they had decided to investigate, they had a Poltergeist member cast temporary Mechanical Failure on a passing car to stall it so that they could enter and ride; when the car reached their destination, he cast it again so that they could exit safely. The players gained much amusement in the puzzled frustration of the driver, whose auto had stalled twice without rational explanation. Much later, a Banshee in the group Shrieked in a villain's ear, forcing the villain to run panicked far out into the woods; the Banshee pursued him until he had stopped, then Shrieked in his other ear and chased him all the way back! After such encounters with the living, the PCs were suitably horrified when they ran into another adversary who could not only see them but also had the means to harm them.

Mechanics and presentation: The dice mechanics in the LOST SOULS game are different enough to warrant a note. Skill rolls are made on percentile dice, and each character sheet contains an ART (Action Results Table). On this table, skills are ranked in rows from 1-25, and results are arranged in 10 columns—five Fail ratings and five Succeed ratings—running from Catastrophic to Awesome, respectively. For example, a skill rating of 10 would score Failures of Catastrophic on a roll of 1-6, Pathetic on 7-14, Feeble on 15-24, Inferior on 25-36, and Poor on 37-50; Successes of Passable on 51-64, Good on 65-76, Great on 77-86, Super on 87-94, and Awesome on 95-100. The abilities of NPCs are rated by the column names, so only the players roll dice—the referee needn't bother. Imagine, for instance, that a foe in combat had a defense rating of Poor but an attack rating of Good. In this case, a player would have to score only a Poor attack to overcome the foe's defense, but he would have to make a Good defense to avoid being hit in return. Furthermore, every extra column gained yields additional effects, with many skills or weapons having a multiplier. For instance, the Time Stop Power lasts for a number of game turns determined by a "Passable vs. Fate" roll, so a result of Poor or less means the Power failed to operate, while a Passable yields one turn, a Good two, a Great three, and so on. By the same token, a baseball bat does x 3 damage, so a foe with a Good defense rating would take no damage on a roll of Passable or less, but would suffer three points on a Good roll, six on a Great, nine on a Super, and 12 on an Awesome. Speaking of damage, every character in this game begins with exactly 20 WTL (Will To Live) points. Some supernatural creatures may rise above that by draining other creatures of their WTL.

A few other game mechanics are worth mentioning. Combat turns are roughly six seconds long. Ranges are "brawling," "thrown," "missile," and "too far away." Skill checks can get column adjustments or skill adjustments, but dice adjustments are never given. Characters who run out of WTL points must roll vs. Stamina to avoid reincarnation. A result of Good or better means they are merely unconscious and may be healed; Passable to Poor means they are called back to Limbo (unless they have an uncompleted Vow—see below—in which case they are reincarnated); Inferior or below means they are reincarnated immediately. A Reincarnation Table tells what such characters are reincarnated as, based on current Karma, from Pond Scum at one Karma, to a Higher Being at 60. (The results are quite funny, with pond scum giving way to intestinal parasite, then bread mold, amoeba, worm, etc., and ranking human lawyer just one point above chimpanzee and two points below human born in abject poverty.)

That should suffice to give you a good idea of what the rest of the mechanics of the LOST SOULS rules are like. From the examples above, it should be evident that the game plays quickly and simply. The designers have done a commendable job of creating a fast and flexible system that remains fairly transparent, thereby enhancing role-playing.

Summation: In all, the LOST SOULS game is an extremely satisfying product. Its premise is unusual, its characters exciting, and its mechanics fun. There are some minor problems, mainly involved with the game's unusual nature. For example, the game mentions that there are entire towns built out of ectoplasm and populated by ghosts, but nowhere does it explain how those towns survive daylight. In fact, the whole premise of ectoplasm being fully affected by the material world, but not the reverse, raises some thorny questions. For instance, one death type provides an ectoplasmic car, but what happens if that car collides with a rabbit? A moth? A mosquito? A dust mote? How does it stand up to the wind of its own passage? Similarly, ghosts can't pass through walls without using a Power, but what about through water? If not water, why air? Such things are left to the referee to explain.

Some may find the job of refereeing the LOST SOULS game daunting as well, because of the unusual position it puts players' characters in. PCs are dead, and they get chances to haunt the living, but they still aren't the "monsters" in the game. Instead, there are all sorts of evil beings, some natural and some supernatural, that the PCs must face. The game book lists a number of supernatural creatures—barghests, chain rattlers, cowled gibberlings, crypt lurkers, ghouls, hell hounds, Hitler, Jack the Ripper, night hags, nightmares, talking mongooses, skeletons, and zombies—as well human foes such as cultists, demonologists, mad scientists, and necromancers; it also mentions other planes of existence. However, the work of fleshing out the details of this supernatural world are left pretty much up to the referee.

Fortunately, the game gives some strong direction on how to put together and run adventures, and the sample adventure in the book stands as a solid example of what to do. (There is another sample adventure by the designers, in issue #8 of a small-press magazine called *The Scroll*, if you can find it, and an adventure by yours truly in issue #65 of GDW's *Challenge** magazine.) Also, the player-character backgrounds provide rich material for seeds of adventures. In my opinion, the game is just so appealing and fun to play that any effort the referee makes is well worth it.

I've mentioned that the game is a mix of hilarity and horror. As I've mused about that mix, I've wondered from time to time if it was intentional or not. Reading



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through the book for the first time can be disconcerting. After laughing at all the death types and the ironic comments scattered throughout, the horror of the sample adventure is something of a shock. But the proof is in the play. The hilarity of character generation keeps people interested and makes that part of the first session not only fun but quick enough to leave plenty of time to play the sample adventure. And I've had no problems with players shifting gears from the humor to the horror (getting into the "spirit," if you will). The only thing I still find jarring is the Reincarnation table. It's funny, but I think it somewhat cheapens the passing-on of PCs who lose all their WTL, then fail their Stamina rolls.

Because character generation is so much fun and takes relatively little time, and because the game mechanics are so straightforward and easy, the LOST SOULS game will serve well as an occasional diversion—with brand-new characters each time, should you so desire. On the other hand, each character comes with enough background to prompt at least two or three adventures, which means that a group of five could conceivably serve as the basis of a campaign for at *least* 15 sessions.

In case it hasn't been obvious thus far, I heartily recommend this game, and I greatly hope for more adventures from the Williamses.

AQUELARRE* game

96-page rule book
JOC Internacional Price n/a
Design: Ricard Ibáñez
Cover: Arnal Ballester
Interior art: Montse Fransoy and Arnal Ballester

An American publisher once asked me to analyze this Spanish role-playing game's suitability for translation and publication in the U.S.A. In reading through the game, I quickly came to the opinion that the AQUELARRE game is not suitable for the American market. In part, the reason is that it presents such a strong medieval Spanish feel, one that would leave most American readers cold, I think. More important, the AQUELARRE game approaches fantasy in a way that many Americans would find offensive.

I think it valuable to consider the whys and wherefores of that. As anyone who has studied a foreign language knows, our native language is "transparent" to us until we have some other by which to compare. In other words, our native language seems as natural to us as breathing; when we study another language, however, we come to see just how arbitrary many of our own language structures are, and consequently we understand them much better.

Similarly, our own culture is pretty much transparent to us until we're confronted with a different culture. That confrontation can be an irritation, or it can bring us to both recognize our native culture's limitations and appreciate its beauties to an extent not possible before. Our role-playing is a reflection of our culture, and in the interest of making our role-playing less transparent, I offer this review of the AQUELARRE game.

Problems: The problem with this game, from an American publisher's point of view, is evident from the very first. The very title means a ceremony for invoking major demons, often by means of a Black Mass. If that weren't bad enough, the subtitle translates as "The demoniacal Medieval role-playing game." Actually, in this regard, the title and subtitle are misleading. In truth, only 50% of the game is about such things as demon summoning; the other 50% details a straightforward medieval role-playing setting. In reflection of this, one of the most significant statistics for characters in this game is their Rationality/Irrationality ratio. Characters with a high Rationality rating are skeptical of the supernatural and thereby fairly immune to it. Characters with a high Irrationality score are not only able to manipulate the supernatural but are also highly susceptible to it. On one side, then, exists the world of the day—of light, Good, and Rationality; on the other stands the world of night—of darkness, Evil, and Irrationality. The illustrations in the book show this same sort of dichotomy, with about half depicting typical Medieval warriors, merchants, bards, etc., and the other half depicting nude witches, phantasms, basilisks, demons, and the like.

Another stumbling block for American publishers, in regards to the art, is occasional full frontal nudity, both female and male (though the male examples are all doglike demons, and our culture has less trouble with canine nudity). Lest I give you the wrong impression, let me hasten to point out that the medieval look is such that the artwork comes across as art and not as pornography. To cite two examples of American game art that have something of the same feel, let me point to the succubus on page 230 of TSR's AD&D® 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide*, and the obviously male gargoyle on the cover of the first printing of Metagaming's old MELEE* game. Nonetheless, the nudity in this game's artwork is another strike against it, where the American market is concerned.

As a final death blow to the game, let me talk a bit more about the magic system. (This is somewhat out of sequence, I realize, as I haven't even mentioned more basic game mechanics yet, but let me deal with all the "offenses" first.) The magic system reads like a primer for Black Magic, with some alchemy thrown in. Spells come in five types (talisman, potion, ointment, curse, and invocation); each is arranged by level of difficulty and is written in recipe style, with essential material components listed and instructions given for how to combine them while preparing the spell. The first listed serves as a good example: It is a "Sexual Attraction" ointment, requiring specific named components that are to be heated in a stone oven, ground and mixed until they become a greasy powder, then applied to the object of the seducer's love. The next few spells include a metal-corrosion ointment, an unbreakable-armor ointment, a lamp of finding, and a potion to heighten knowledge. All are written in the same style as the first. As the power and Irrationality of the spells increase, so too does the offensiveness of the components. Perhaps the worst is the Invocation of Shadows, which requires the performance of a Black Mass involving a detailed human sacrifice—pretty grim stuff, and not standard American role-playing fare.

Note, however, that this is not the publication of some small, off-the-wall press, Instead, it is the work of one of Spain's major role-playing companies, one that does considerable business in the Spanish translations of American games. The problem, I think, is that the AQUELARRE game sets out to recreate the feel of medieval Spain with some historical accuracy, including the historical attitude that magic is satanic. Unfortunately, it does its job all too well for the tastes of the American gamer.

The usual stuff: That isn't all that's worth talking about concerning the AQUELARRE game. It is instructive to consider its physical components and game systems as well, comparing them to standard American games.

To this point, every game product I have ever seen from Spanish publishers is hardbound. I'm told that this is not coincidence, but rather reflects the Spanish game-buying public. The AQUELARRE game, like all the others I've seen, is excellently bound, with a very durable cover, and is sure to last a long time. The book has a nice appearance, too. As mentioned before, all of the artwork has a medieval woodcut look to it, with the sorts of perspectives and size distortions common to the period; it serves well to evoke an atmosphere appropriate to the game. The text is laid out in an easy-to-read fashion, with headings numbered as well as sized by importance, and with tables boxed off to clearly delineate them from the bulk of the text. What's more, the tone of the text is a personable one, though without unnecessary digressions. In all, it is a nice package.

The game system is pretty standard fare—no surprise mechanics or innovations—but the whole is smoothly executed. A character chooses a class at the start, and from it gains a number of skills. The skill ratings are based largely upon a character's attributes. Skill checks are made on 1d100; positive or negative modifiers are added to adjust for difficulty. Combat turns are 12 seconds long, during



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which time each character can perform two actions, mixing and matching among Move, Attack, and Defend. Initiative is 1d10 plus Agility. Weapon damages are rated by the number and type of dice rolled, ranging from 1d3 to 1d10+1d4. Armor is rated by how many points of damage it will stop in one blow, and by how many points of stopped damage it can accrue before being ruined. There are many other details of the mechanics that I won't go into that demonstrate the rules unity of the game.

The book also has a lot of solid background material, including essays on life in the Middle Ages, four sample adventures (one solitaire), a list of pregenerated characters, and a nicely laid out character sheet. A companion volume *(Lilith)* contains 13 more adventures (including another solitaire), plus an article on military orders and a set of mass-combat rules.

Conclusion: I find myself *wanting* to like the AQUELARRE game. The smooth-and-simple game system is very appealing, and I have a strong interest in the background. But the magic is just too brutal . . . at least for this American. But then, I don't like the idea of bullfights, either.

PENTACLE * game
Two rules sheets, six player sheets, and 128 cards, in an 8½" x 11" zip-lock bag
Morning Star Games $10.00
Design: Tim Carleton
Artwork: Helen Dunsmoir and Elisa Merdith

Speaking of demons, here is another little game that some people may find offensive. It is something like a fantasy version of Flying Buffalo's NUCLEAR WAR* card game. In the PENTACLE game, players are wizards, holed up in their own individual towers and trying to kill one another. To this purpose, they employ such things as golems and familiars, but mostly they use magic spells, and the majority of the attack spells are ones that summon demons to attack enemy mages.

The mechanics of the PENTACLE game are quite nice. Pretty much all of the beings that show up in the game, including the mages themselves, have three simple numerical ratings: Attack, Defense, and Psyche. Some things, like golems, have no Psyche rating (they're impervious to psychic attack); others, like elementals, have no Defense (they're immune to physical attacks). Combat consists of having the guardian closest to your tower door, if you've laid any out, attack the first invader at the door, assuming that you haven't managed to take the invader out with a booby-trap card or a magical barrier. Sometimes the lines of waiting invaders get pretty deep. You choose whether an attack will be physical or psychic, depending upon the ratio of the guardian's combat strength to the invaders. The players controlling the combatants each roll 1d6 and add it to the applicable scores, with the high scorer winning. If the invader loses, it is dead; otherwise, it now has a chance to strike back at the guardian, each combatant again choosing the most appropriate combat type. Combat continues in this way until the invader is dead, the defender is dead, or the wizard spends a point of Psyche to bypass an attack on her or him personally.

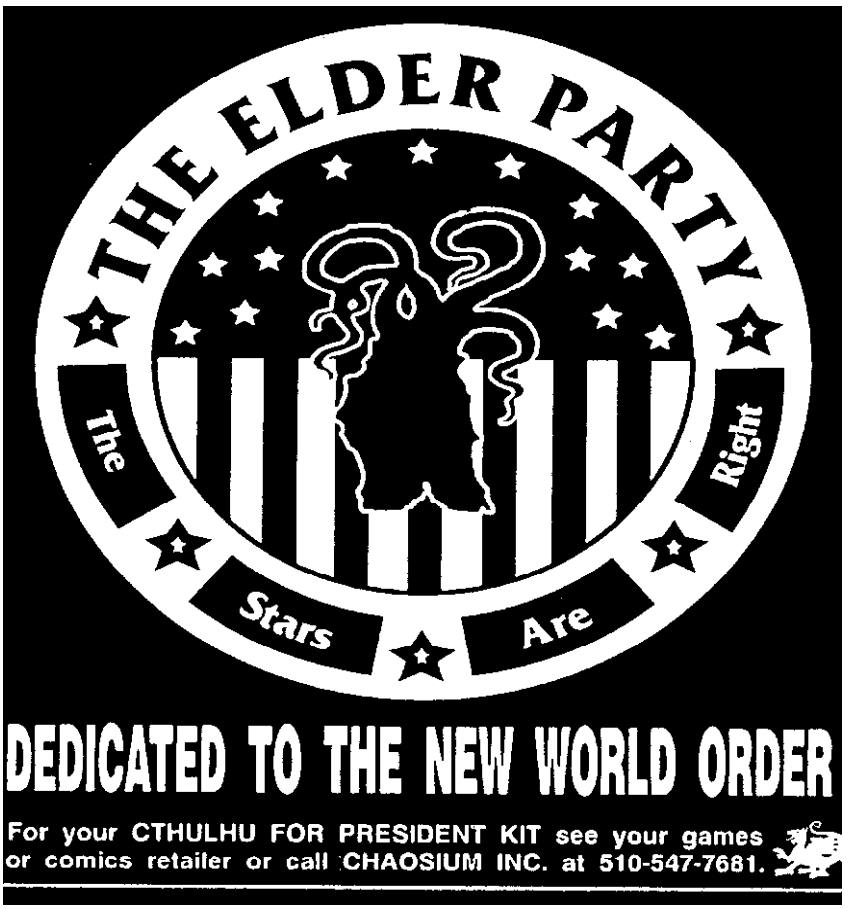
Summoning demons is somewhat chancy. To do so, you play a summoning card and hope that the level of the demon drawn is equal to or less than that of the summoning spell cast. Otherwise, the wizard must spend a point of Psyche to gain control of the thing. Once controlled, the demon is sent to attack someone else's stronghold.

Players continue until each one's particular wizard has died (foolishly accepting a physical attack, rather than delaying it by expending a Psyche point) or gone mad (the usual state of affairs, considering how often Psyche points are spent). Mad wizards are allowed one final turn with every spell in their hand, rather than the normal limit of two per turn. It is even possible for a mad wizard to regain sanity thus, by leeching away a Psyche point from someone else. The last living, sane wizard in the game is the winner. Sometimes, there are no winners.

Physically, the PENTACLE game definitely shows its small-press origins. The cards come as perforated sheets of uncoated cardstock, which means that they are somewhat difficult to shuffle and quite prone to wear. The art on them is primarily clip art (commendably, the game includes a full list of sources for it all), with some modest original line art in the mix as well. Three-quarters of the cards are printed black on white; the rest are printed red on white. The cover sheet is solid black cardstock printed with a prismatic silver pentacle and titles. Its back sheet is parchment-colored stock printed with black ink and decorated primarily with sample cards arranged around a bit of back text. Each player sheet (tower) is also parchment-colored stock printed with black ink, decorated with a simple stonework pattern around the edges of its play area (and with a graphic of a welcome mat at the "door"). The rules sheet and card reference sheet are simply white stock with black print. Overall, the game appears to be carefully produced but with a definite eye toward minimal expense.

The PENTACLE system is a fast-moving game, with a lot of atmosphere. I very much recommend it. If you cannot find it at your local hobby shop, you can write to the producers at Morning Star Games, 418 Vliet Boulevard, Cohoes NY 12047. Ω

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The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

Part 33: Lords of shade and hue

by Bruce A. Heard

Artwork by Terry Dykstra

This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.

From the Journals of
Prince Haldemar of Haaken
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire
Captain of the Ever-Victorious
Princess Ark
Imperial Explorer, etc, etc.

Amphimir 17, AY 2001: Three days have passed since we left the gator men's Bayou. All that talk of Alphatia and Thyatis was a troubling matter. I found the Wizard King of Herath's ability to send dreams to people extremely disquieting, and I asked my old friend Talasar for a special prayer that would protect us. I could not run the risk of having any of my officers' minds affected in such a treacherous fashion. I was deep in my thoughts when the snap of thunder shook the *Princess Ark*. What now? I heard Talasar sounding the alarm on the upper deck, and squads of boltmen running up to their battle stations. This was no ordinary storm. I rushed topside.

The *Princess* was climbing to get above some big thunderheads when three silvery creatures swooped by. I thought at first these were dragons, but the unusual silver color made this improbable. They looked more like wyverns. One of them suddenly released a *lightning bolt* at us. No, they weren't wyverns either.

Another flew past us and spat a second bolt just before disappearing into the storm clouds. Its bolt shattered a mast and scorched much of the rigging. Luckily, no one was hurt. The boltmen released their anger and their wands at the "wyverns," but their bolts did not seem to hurt the creatures much. Perhaps they had some immunity to lightning—it would make sense.

More of the creatures attacked. The crew was better prepared now and met the assault with determination. The magical fire of the light ballistas traced graceful arches through the dark, forcing the creatures to jink and roll before diving on the *Princess*. One got its wing caught in a heavy ballista's magical *web*, screeched, and tumbled down into the clouds. Another vanished instantly as it ran afoul of the catapult's devastating magic. Berylith defeated several others in her path, but the attacks continued, unrelenting.

It became clear that the attacks were not meant to destroy the *Princess Ark*. The creatures were directing their assaults at masts, sails, and other unoccupied areas. Despite damage and utter chaos on deck, no one aboard had been hurt thus far.

I took a gamble and ordered a cease fire. The creatures swooped a few more times, observing, then disappeared into the dark clouds. I still had no clue as to why the attack took place, other than something or someone wanting to disable the ship. The *Princess* showed damage serious enough that repair was required at once. When the storm ended, we would descend to the land below, and mend the masts and rigging.





Amphimir 18, Haldemar from a later account: We found a secluded clearing in the forest. The *Princess* slowly descended to the treetops, and the crew fastened lines to hold her steady. The plan was to acquire several good quality logs for the masts, but this would expose the crew as they would no longer benefit from the *Princess's invisibility* Xerdon and Nyanga returned after a few hours from their scouting mission. They had seen no one in the woods. All seemed peaceful. Work began immediately.

When I was convinced all safety measures had been taken, I left the ship to oversee repairs. I had to pick the trees needed for the masts. I was best qualified for this, because of the enchantments that would be needed eventually. The raucous laughter of a bird echoed strangely somewhere in the forest. Moments later, the crew began cutting down a majestic tree. I sat on a mossy rock next to a pond, as the tree trunk creaked and groaned in its fall.

Some time went by as Raman and the crew examined the log for any splinters or irregularities. Satisfied, he turned toward me and began, "This one's perfect, Your High . . . Admiral?" He turned around several times, apparently not seeing me. Hands on his hips, he added "Well, by Yiggureth, where is he now?"

How could he not see me? I just sat there, amazed. I walked up to him. Strange—he seemed twice as tall as he used to be. Indeed, I could barely reach his belt. Perhaps this place was magical. I tugged on his belt.

"Eh, what's this? Shoo! Out of my way, you, I'm busy." said Raman. He shoved me off to the side, into a bush. "Boltmen," ordered Raman, "sound the alarm, the admiral is missing."

I tried to call, but only a faint squeak came out. A squeak? I realized with horror that I had somehow transformed into some lizard with a big, scaly frill around my neck. A lizard? Me!? Who could have dared try such insolent trickery?

The crew stepped aboard the lifeboat. I rushed to get on board, but a boltman grabbed me by the tail and tossed me off the lifeboat. "Hey! Get off, you. Go away, shoo!"

Now what do I do?

Amphimir 18, Talasar: I fear the worst may have happened to the Admiral. None of our search parties have revealed his whereabouts. So far, I've discounted the possibility of wild animals or monsters. No traces of combat were found, nor any remains. I suspect he was abducted. Why, I do not know yet.

Native tribesmen have been sighted leaving the forest, south of our position. They could have had something to do with the admiral. I sent Xerdon and Nyanga to observe them. Lady Abovombe decided to join their party. I will remain to oversee repairs. I've doubled boltmen patrols in the vicinity. No one is to be alone at any time until this mystery is unveiled.

Amphimir 18, Haldemar from a later account: Alas, I had to leave the forest after running into several unsavory critters with cravings for lizard flesh. I discovered I could frighten smaller animals by stretching out my frill and standing up menacingly. This was useful since I couldn't cast any magic in my current shape. I also discovered I could run quite fast as well. I've done a lot of that lately.

I was north of the forest, in open grassland. I must admit I'd lost my way in the tall grass, with no possibility of reaching the ship. This could be trouble.

Some sudden noise in the grass got my attention. A tribesman squatting nearby, observed me silently. He must have had some lizardkin blood, judging from the very fine scales covering his skin. He otherwise seemed almost human. I looked him in the eyes, hoping perhaps to communicate.

"Friend . . . Help . . ." I thought very hard.

He began aiming his spear at me. Well, that didn't work. Time to run!

I ran until I ended up in a dead-end, at the base of a large rocky monolith. Drat! I tried to use the frill thing to intimidate my pursuer. The tribesman, raised an eyebrow, pulled a curved piece of wood and hurled it at me. It spun in the air and flew right past my head. "Ha!" I thought. "Missed me!" That's when the wooden missile suddenly came back and hit me in the back of the head. That was it. I thought I was to end up as some tribesman's dinner after all. What a pity. All went dark.

Amphimir 18, Xerdon: We followed the small native hunting party. They had no prisoners, nor any way in which to conceal them. We were about to give up the observation when all 12 tribesmen suddenly vanished from the path. They were nowhere to be seen.

Later in the night, the tribesmen returned. They quietly entered our campsite, without any warning. Nyanga, who was on watch at the time, saw no telling sign of their arrival—they just appeared next to us.

Fortunately, these tribesmen were peaceful and simply curious about who we were. They tossed a strange creature's carcass, which they called a *roo*, onto the campfire and roasted it. One of the so-far silent tribesmen spoke after the roo feast.

They knew nothing of the admirals fate. We were the first people of our kind that they had met. The leader of the tribesmen said he knew some magical place farther south where we could find out about many things. Perhaps the medicine men there would help us. We agreed and decided to leave the next day at dawn.

Amphimir 19, Haldemar from a later account: I woke up with a throbbing headache. I thought it all had been a bad dream, but I had no such luck. I hung from a branch, with my tail tied to a string— how discouraging.

The tribesman sat nearby, fixing embers in his campfire, probably to roast me. Lizard or not, it was time to act. I swung a few times at the end of my tail, leaped, and ended up perched on the branch. That caught the tribesman's attention.

I stood up, pointed a little reptilian finger at my captor, and then down at the offending string still at my tail. The tribesman took a few steps back in amazement. He scratched his head, then regained his composure. He approached and removed the string, watching me carefully.

He considered me for an instant, then stirred up his campfire again. Embers crackled and sparks rose above him as he began chanting. This was a shaman perhaps, who knew magic to talk to lizards. He said he was Gagidju, a walkabout medicine man.

"Ooh," he said. "You are gondaman. Barramundje cursed you."

"Who's that, and why was I cursed?" I asked.

"She Spirit Mother of Wallara. She protects land, water in the billabongs, trees in the outback. Should listen to kookaburra's call when you hear it. You angered Barramundje. Unwise . . ." said Gagidju. "Now, you gondaman."

"Well, can you break the curse?" I asked.

"Ooh no. Very unwise. Only great spirit breaks Barramundje's curse. We can go to dreamstone. There, the Eagle Spirit will help," answered Gagidju. He then added "Maybe."

Amphimir 20, Xerdon: We reached a small town in the rocky hills. It looked like an ancient archeological site. Judging from their architecture, the buildings must have been erected centuries ago by some advanced civilization. They had fallen in ruins at some point, and the tribesmen had taken over the site. They tried to rebuild some of the structures, using mud and straw, but clearly none of the original work was theirs. They religiously cleaned up the older structures and revealed long forgotten runes that their medicine men studied at length.

They called the place Risilvar, the lost city. Our arrival caused some agitation. Medicine men looked at us and said, "Balandas—evil spirits" From then on, no one would speak to us. Even the tribesmen who had led us here shunned us. We were free to go about Risilvar as we pleased, but everyone kept their distance.

Lady Abovombe had seen this kind of behavior among the tribes in her nation. She believed we had stepped right into these medicine-men's beliefs. They associated us with some ancestral enemy in their mythology. We had to prove our peaceful intentions.

She later found a wounded tribesman in one of the ruins. Fortunately, she had brought an *ointment of soothing* that she put to good use. A medicine man called Kapurugi was watching and appreciated the act. He later agreed to help to us.

Lady Abovombe explained, "We are

strangers in this land, Kapurugi. We never meant harm to anyone here. We are seeking a lost friend. Those who had led us here thought that the mystery of our friends disappearance could be solved here in Risilvar."

"Many secrets can be unveiled in the lost city," said the medicine man, "but first we need a corroboree."

He called upon a few of his friends, and they built a fire in one of the alleyways and began dancing and chanting around it. Strange colors appeared on their skins, and kept changing as the corroboree went on. Sparks and smoke rose from the fire. In the flames there appeared a fish, then a strange lizard with a frill. Finally a great eagle appeared and took the lizard away into a mountain.

"Your friend is alive. But he's a gondaman, a cursed one. He roams the outback now," said Kapurugi.

"What do you mean, he's cursed?" asked Lady Abovombe.

"He is a lizard. You must leave him alone. He caused a quarrel between the Spirit Mother and the Eagle Spirit. This is bad. You must leave the lost city now."

This wasn't much help at all. There must have been some mountain somewhere in the grasslands north from here. Perhaps we would find the admiral—or a lizard—there. This was rather bizarre. We had to return to the *Princess Ark* and report all this to Talasar. Kapurugi met us at the gate of Risilvar. He held three very large, flightless birds. He handed us their reins and mimicked the position of a horseman. "Take emus. You will need them to travel the outback. Good luck."

Amphimir 20, Haldemar from a later account: After a day's march across the outback, Gagidju and I arrived at the Wallabong dreamstone. The great stone monolith rose straight up from the grass. On our way to the top, I noticed several ancient paintings, and finally the entrance to a large cavern with a small billabong.

Gagidju set up camp in a sandy corner. I had ample opportunity to observe this medicine man during our journey. The very fine reptilian scales covering his body had a tendency to change colors slightly, depending on the surrounding or the light, very much like a chameleon. The skin had a shimmering quality that unnerved me several times.

Gagidju lit a small fire, and he carefully livened the embers. This time he pulled out small chips of opal and played with them for some time. He then tossed hand-sized pieces of painted bark into the fire and began chanting. The ceremony lasted hours, until well after sunset. The flames were casting odd moving shadows against the cavern's vault. At times I could see the shadows of birds among the rocks. Mesmerized, I began seeing images in the shadows, as if I were dreaming. Soon my mind was lost in the pattern of moving dark shapes.

Amphimir 21, Talasar: Xerdon finally returned from his mission. At the idea of the admiral being turned into a lizard, I prayed all night for all manners of removing curses. A long day lay ahead of us. The task of hunting down every frilled lizard in the region was both ludicrous and daunting, but nevertheless seemed crucial. Where could the admiral be?

I sent out the crew in small hunting parties with nets and bags, and the hunt began. Xerdon, Abovombe, and Nyanga would ride their emus, scouting the grasslands for signs of the admiral. Meanwhile, I would examine each and every one of those lizards. Perhaps I could discern which was the admiral.

Hours later, some of the teams began returning with bags full of lizards. Soon the deck was rampant with runaway frilled lizards, goannas, and other unrelated animals. Later in the night, natives began following the crew to the *Princess Ark,* gleefully selling anything they could lay their hands on, including amazing creatures that delighted Raman. The deck became a racing track for platypuses, spiny anteaters, flying squirrels, dingoes, koala bears, wombats, and kangaroos. This happy crowd was soon returned to the ground below so I could concentrate on the remaining frilled lizards at last.

Amphimir 21, Haldemar from a later account: Gagidju had already left when I awoke from the magical dreams. Gagidju's dreams were truly amazing. I saw the eagle that Gagidju had spoken of.

It had risen from the furtive shadows of the cavern and turned into a man with small flames coming out of his eyes. At his feet sat the silvery "thunderheads." the creatures that had attacked the *Princess Ark* during the storm. They seemed very small next to him. An hourglass appeared in his hand, and he hurled it against the ground, shattering it. He finally said "Beware of the mountain wizards. They bring the doom of your world." Finally, a fish approached the edge of the cavern's pond. It transformed into an elven maiden with a gem in her forehead. She waved her hand at me and I regained my former human shape. Mist then rose in the cavern and I lost consciousness again.

Upon my awakening, Lady Abovombe appeared at the cavern's entrance, riding a strange bird. I thought for a moment I was still dreaming. After my companions' arrival in the cavern had finally dispelled my confusion, we gathered near the pond and spoke at length about what had occurred. I could have talked at length about all I had experienced lately, but it was clear that we had to return to Alphatia without delay.

Far too many clues about an ominous future had kept surfacing in our path. They could no longer be ignored or dismissed as mere coincidences. Neither was there any evidence that my dream of the hourglass symbol and the new mention of mountain wizards—presumably Glantrians—came from the sinister creatures I had met several days ago, namely the Neh-Thalggu or the Wizard-King of Herath[1]. Perhaps I had indeed met with the Immortals. With a chill I recalled the vision of Sésékumbo, the Prophet of Yavdlom's brother[2], when he died in Jaibul six months ago. The empire was in danger, and we had to warn Her Majesty at once.

1. See *Princess Ark* episodes 30 & 32, DRAGON® Magazine #183 & 185.
2. See *Princess Ark* episodes 16 & 17, DRAGON® Magazine #169 & 170.

To be continued. . .

The Land of Wallara

Land of Wallara—Capital: Risilvar (pop.: 9,500 chameleon men); ruler: Bakaloo "Sunskin," son of Woy "The Dreamer"; patron: The Rainbow Serpent.

Chameleon men descended from the Wallaras, a native race of hunter-gatherers, possibly one of the oldest races on Mystara. There was a time in the past when the Wallaras walked side by side with the spirits that created them. They were in tune with the land, so much so that Wallaras equated their life and well-being to that of the earth and its wealth. The Wallaras viewed themselves as the protectors of nature with which their creators had entrusted them. They built a small city, Risilvar, in the hills where the link between them and their Immortal patrons was the greatest. From there, they flourished and learned much about the universe.

These were very wise people, a race that could pierce mysteries that other races did not even suspect existed. Although a small, peaceful people, Wallaras soon attracted the enmity of the Herathians who had many dark secrets to hide. The Wallaras knew of the aranean nature of the Herathian wizards, but saw it not as a threat but as just another incarnation of nature. Alas, Herathians did not follow this thinking, As years passed, the discomfort of believing their concealment was at risk grew unbearable to native araneas. This situation caused a frightening psychosis with which araneas did not know how to deal. At greatest risk were the older creatures, often the most powerful ones. Thus, the greatest wizards created a spell that would remove all knowledge of the araneas' true identity from the mind of the Wallaras. Alas, the mental uneasiness prevailing among Herathian wizards at the time caused them to miscalculate the severity of their spells effect.

The result was catastrophic. In removing knowledge of the araneas from the minds of the Wallaras, the spell backfired and kept altering the memory of Wallaras. Herathians were at a loss to halt the spell, and the hapless Wallaras' civilization fell back to the stone age. Only obscure memories and legends of their past survived in their minds.

This tragedy caused the Great One—the immortal patron of Wallara—to seek revenge. A plague of dragons attacked Herath. Araneas were experienced and organized enough to survive the wrath of the Great One, though at a dreadful cost to their nation. Herath faced such horrendous devastation that Korotiku met with the Great One and explained the error of his aranean followers. It cost The Trickster dearly to convince the Great One to cease the attacks, in addition to a promise of Herath never to interfere with the Wallaras again. The message got through to the aranean clerics, and soon Herathians began rebuilding their nation. The Herathian clergy also destroyed all traces of the despicable *spell of forgetting*, and forever banned further research on its effects for fear that someday it might be used against Herathians.

Meanwhile, the Wallaras remained primitive nomads, seeking the secrets of their past. They believed that, indeed, spirits once walked this land, but it was a Time of Dreams, the time when the Immortals created them. They thought for a long time that the spirits lived in the rocky hills, and no one was allowed to go there. Centuries later, walkabout medicine men seeking knowledge of their past entered the Forbidden Highlands and discovered the Lost City of Risilvar. There they found old runes and symbols that told ancient stories of spirits, sky heroes, and Immortals. This became a hallowed place that all tribes could visit freely, and many did. Many returned to their nomadic ways, while others decided to settle in small villages in the grassland outback.

Today, chameleon men are slowly relearning their past, and shreds of their ancient civilization are starting to reappear. The remainder of the hills, mostly south of the Forbidden River, are still taboo. No one is to enter them for fear of evil spirits living there. Wallara medicine men have gotten messages from the sky that beyond the river lay the land of the *balandas*, evil spirits that steal people's souls. In truth, this refers to Herathians.

The Wallaras haven't gotten as close to the Immortals as they used to be. Immortals are convinced that this was not necessarily a good thing for mortals. After all, this closeness turned out to be the Wallaras' undoing. Chameleon men are still a wise people, but they no longer have the curiosity to see through mysteries. Their special wisdom applies mostly to their land and their people.

The Land of Wallara is at peace nowadays. Other than Herath, chameleon men have two other neighbors, the gator men of Gurr'ash at the northeastern end of the outback, and the Phanaton people at the western edge of Wallara. The latter are friendly, and some trade exists among the two races, mostly opals, quartz stones, and animal pelts being traded for phanaton goods. A large battle took place once, just after the Herathian spell wiped the chameleon- men's memory, but since then, the Wallaras have returned to their senses and back to peace.

The gator men are another story (see episode #32, issue #185). In order to preserve peace, chameleon men managed to make the dangerous gator men believe that the grasslands belong to their Immortal patron. On the other hand, they maintained a curious trading system with the unwitting gator men. Only the wiser tribesmen may enter the Wallaroo Grasslands bordering the Bayou, and always under the guidance of medicine men. Gator men occupy a very special place in the chameleon men's mythology. For Wallaras, gator men are an embodiment of Genjoo, the Crocodile Spirit. Because of this, they must be respected.

Flora and fauna: The land is mostly a long, temperate plain covered with tall grasses and small clumps of forests. Occasionally, a lonely boab (baobab) offers some shade in the middle of the grassland outback. The light forest bordering the Forbidden Highlands is mostly eucalyptus trees, with acacias, mosses, and ferns where the woods grow thicker. Some vegetation struggles to grow in the rocky hills of the highlands, including patches of porcupine grass, saltbushes, and rare, stunted trees. The Forbidden River takes its source in salted grounds. Its muddy, brackish water remains inadequate for consumption. The Forbidden Highlands are mostly sandstone, with many forgotten caverns of the ancient Wallara. To keep with the overall feel of the Wallara wilderness, here are some creatures common to the region, and their game statistics:

Saltwater crocodile: Common in the Forbidden River and on the Great Billabong shores (Trident Bay), these large saurians are the true bane of the Wallaras. AC 3, HD 6 (L), MV 90′ (30′) on land or water, AT 1 bite, D 2d8, NA 0 (1d4), Save F3, ML 7, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 275.

Dingo: These wild dogs are commonly found in the hills or in the grassy outback. They normally hunt in packs. Lonely

Table 1: Chameleon Man Levels

Level	XP	HD	Special abilities
-1	-2000	1d8	–
0	0	2d8	Vanish
1	2,000	3d8	–
2	8,000	4d8	–
3	17,000	–	Mimic
4	34,000	5d8	–
5	72,000	6d8	–
6	144,000	7d8	–
7	300,000	–	Dream
8	600,000	8d8	–
9	900,000 *	+2 hp**	–

Table 2: Medicine Man Levels

			Spell levels				
Level	**XP**	**HD**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1	-3,000	1d8	–	–	–	–	–
0	0	2d8	1	–	–	–	–
1	3,000	3d8	2	–	–	–	–
2	12,000	4d8	2	1	–	–	–
3	24,000	–	2	2	–	–	–
4	48,000	5d8	2	2	1	–	–
5	96,000	6d8	2	2	2	–	–
6	192,000	7d8	3	2	2	1	–
7	380,000	–	3	3	2	2	–
8	680,000	8d8	3	3	3	2	1
9	980,000 *	+2 hp**	3	3	3	3	2

* +300,000 XP per extra level
* * + 2 hp per level, constitution bonus no longer applies
Note that constitution bonuses should be added only when the PC is created and every time it gains a new level, up to level 8.

Wallara medicine men often keep tame dingoes as companions. AC 7, HD 2 (M), MV 180′ (60′), AT 1 bite, D ld6, NA 0 (3-18), Save F1, ML 6-8, TT Nil, Int 3, AL N, XP 20 (AC9, page 14).

Spiny anteater (Echidna): An egg-laying mammal that burrows under the ground, this nocturnal anteater uses its long, sticky tongue to catch insects. Beware of its giant cousin: AC 5, HD 9* (L), MV 90′ (30′) or 60′ (30′) when burrowing, AT 1 tongue, D 3d6/rd, NA 1-2 (0), Save F5, ML 8, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 1,600. The giant echidna lashes at its prey with its sticky tongue, sweeping a cone-shaped area equivalent to a standard dragon's breath. All small- or medium-sized creatures within this area must save vs. dragon breath or be stuck on the tongue. The giant echidna then pulls its victims into its mouth, causing 3d6 points of damage per round to each of them. At the end of each round, victims can pull free if they succeed a Strength check.

Emu: This is a 6-7′ tall, flightless bird similar to the ostrich. Chameleon men of the grassy outback use large emus as mounts. AC 8, HD 2 (M), MV 240′ (80′), AT 1 beak, D 1d6, NA 0 (2-12), Save F1, ML 6, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 20. *Load:* 750 cn at full speed; 1,500 cn at half-speed. *Barding Multiplier:* x 1.

Goanna: This iguana-like lizard often ends up as prime ingredient of Wallara dinners. The skins can be sold to the phanatons for 2-12 cp each (or equivalent barter value). AC 5, HD ½ (S), MV 120′ (40′), AT 1 bite, D 1d4, NA 0 (l-20), Save F1, ML 7, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 5.

Kangaroo: A common herbivore of the grassy outback and lower hills outcroppings, this marsupial forms an important component of chameleon men diet. Skins can be sold to phanatons for 2d6 silver pieces (or equivalent barter value). AC 8, HD 2 (M), MV 240′ (80′), AT 1 hind leg, D 1d8, NA 0 (3-60), Save F1, ML 7, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 20. The kangaroo can leap up to 60′.

Koala: This marsupial herbivore inhabits the eucalyptus forests of Wallara. Legends say it is the incarnation of a forest spirit, and thus is taboo for hunters. Medicine men sometimes use koalas as familiars. AC 8, HD ½ (S), MV 30′ (10′), AT 1 claw, D 1d4, NA 0 (l-2), Save F1, ML 7, TT Nil, Int 3, AL N, XP 5.

Kookaburra: This kingfisher-like bird is well-known for its raucous, laugh-like call. As with the koalas, kookaburras are rumored to be incarnations of spirits who use their call to warn the travellers of impending dangers, or to mock their ignorance of the land. AC 7, HD ½ (S), MV 360′ (120′) flying or 30′ (10′) swimming, AT Nil, D Nil, NA 0 (l-2), Save F1, ML 6-8, TT Nil, Int 3, AL N, XP 20.

Termite: Termite mounds can be found throughout the grassy outback. Occasionally, giant termites will emerge from caverns in the Forbidden Highlands after heavy rains. These dangerous creatures are cause for alarm and local chameleon-man tribes will hunt them down; AC 4, HD 4 (M), MV 180′ (60′), AT 1 bite, D 2d8, NA 2-8 (4-24), Save F2, ML 7, TT Nil, Int 1, AL N, XP 75.

Wild turkey: Another common element of the chameleon-men's diet; AC 9, HD ½ (S), MV 120′ (40′), AT 1 beak, D 1-2, NA 0 (2-12), Save F1, ML 6, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 5.

Wakaleo: These marsupial lions are rare creatures dwelling in the heavier forested areas. They climb trees and wait, hiding in the leaves, for unsuspecting preys. AC 5, HD 2 +2 (M), MV 150′ (50′), AT 2 claws/l bite, D 1d2/1d2/1d4, NA 1-2 (1-4), Save F1, ML 9, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 25. Can surprise victims on a roll of 1-4 on a 1d6.

Immortal patrons of Wallara

Agundji, The Rainbow Serpent— (alias the Great One). Agundji is the chief Immortal of the Wallara pantheon. Chameleon men are an ancient subspecies of dragons, which explains their magical abilities (vanishing and mimicry at higher levels). Most Wallaras honor Agundji as the lord of all creatures and the patron of sky heroes. Agundji's sphere of interest includes the sky, the element of air, colors, and mimicry. Separate individuals occasionally honor other dragons' rulers, de-

Table 3: Boomerang Statistics

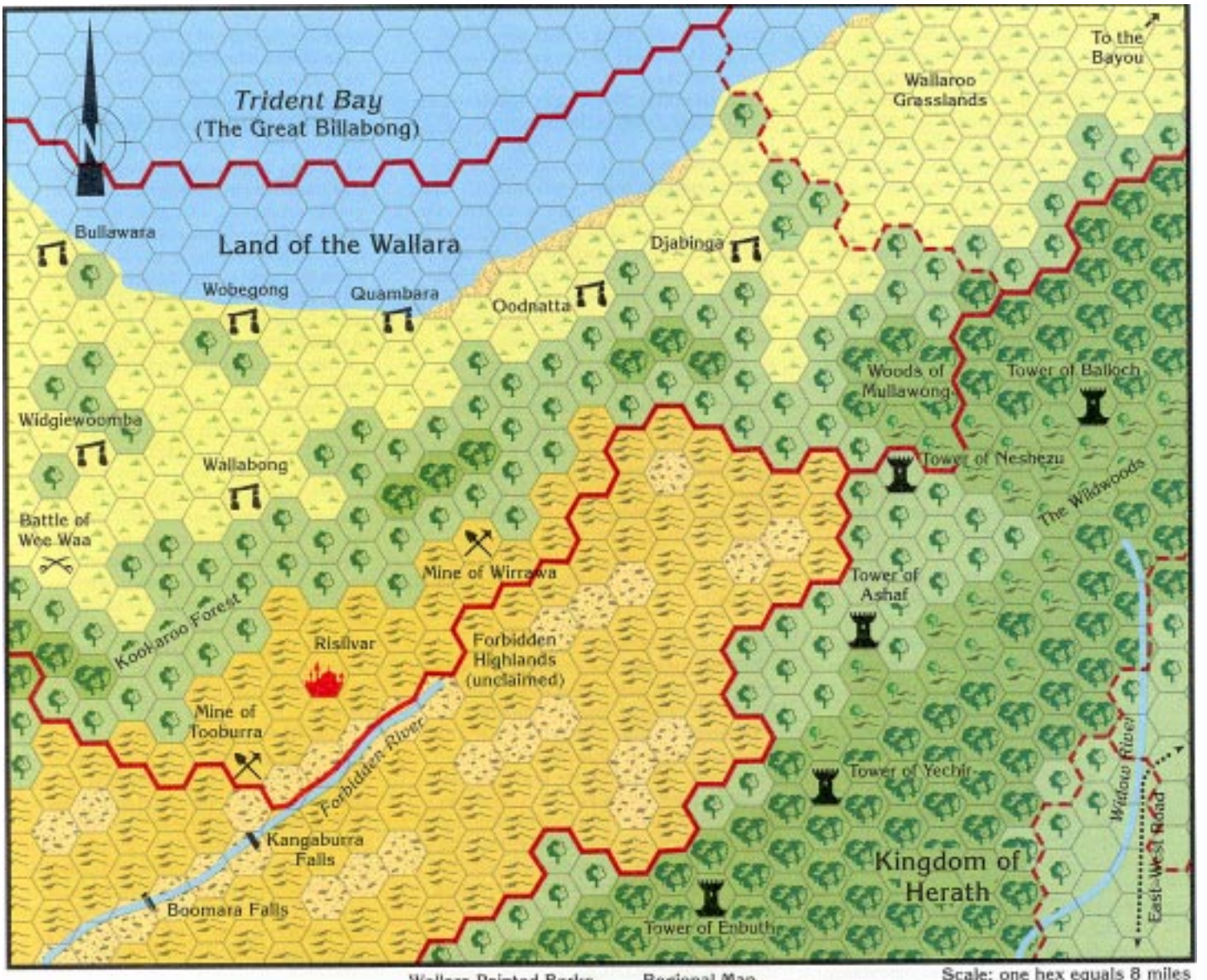
	Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
P=H	*Basic*	40/80/160	ld4	–	–
	Skilled	50/90/160	ld6+1	H:+lAC/2	Stun (s/m)
	Expert	60/100/170	ld6+3	H:+2AC/3	Stun (s/m)
	Master	70/110/170	P:ld6 +5 S:ld4+5	H:+3AC/3	Stun (s/m)
	Gd Master	80/120/180	P:ld6+6 S:ld4+6	H:+4AC/4	Stun (s/m)

P=H: Primary target uses either a hand-held or a hand-thrown weapon.
P: Primary target.
S: Secondary target (with missile weapons or natural weaponry).
H:AC/# AC bonus to the boomerang's user against attacks from opponents using hand-held or hand-thrown weapons, and the number of time it can be used in a single round.

Table 4: Chameleon Men's Statistics

Abilities	St	In	Wi	DX	Co	Ch
Race Max.	**17**	**16**	**18**	**18**	**18**	**18***
Chameleon Men	- 1	–	–	+1	–	–
Medicine Men	- 1	–	+1	–	–	–

* Charisma applies only between chameleon men; otherwise, penalize Charisma by -1 when dealing with other humanoids, -2 when dealing with demihumans or humans.



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Rock Shelter
Battle Site
Mines
Trail
National Border
Dominion Limit
River
Waterfall

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Grasslands
Swamp
Light Forest
Heavy Forest
Forested Hills
Rocky Hills
Rocky Dessert
Sand



Wallara Outback



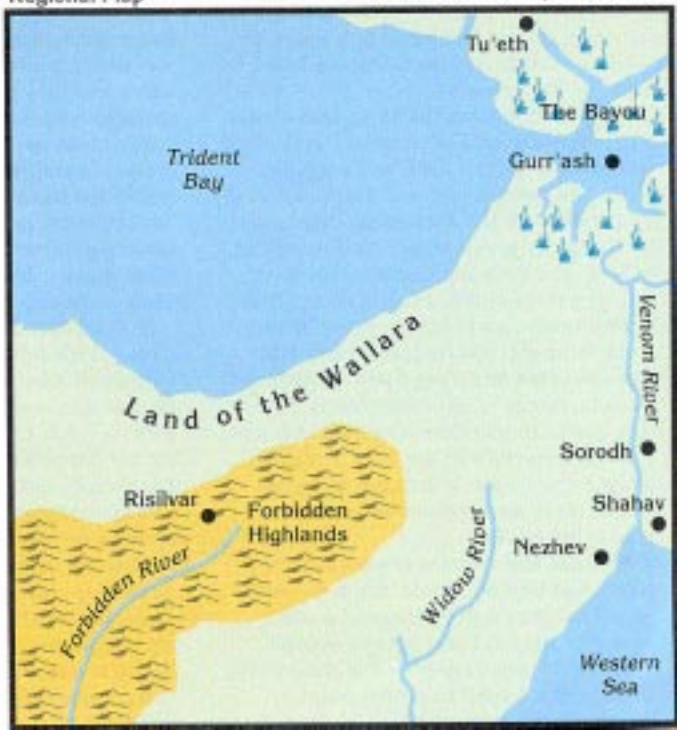
Forbidden Highlands



Wallaroo Grasslands

Regional Map

Scale: one hex equals 8 miles



Cartography by John Knecht

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pending on their alignments, local customs, and circumstances. For example, those working in the Forbidden Highlands' mines of opal often are followers of the Sun Dragon. Wallaras know the lesser dragons' rulers as the Sun Spirit, the Moon Spirit, and the Star Spirit. Most chameleon men believe their souls join their Immortal patrons after dying on Mystara.

Sky Heroes: The goal of these servitors of Agundji is to teach the chameleon men stories of their forgotten past. They also act as Agundji's eyes and ears on Mystara in times of trouble. These beings often appear as lonely, walkabout medicine men. They do not reveal who they are and only stay for a limited time with a tribe, from a few weeks to a couple of years at most. They are mortal creatures whose life forces return to the Rainbow Serpent's home plane upon their death. In addition to typical Wallara medicine-man aptitudes, sky heroes have the innate ability to travel between Mystara and Agundji's home plane, once per full moon.

Barramundje, The Mother—(alias Calitha Starbrow). Barramundje's main concern in Wallara remains that of rivers and billabongs in general, and fertility in particular. Her sphere of interest includes the element of water and all that grows, such as trees and grass. Her symbol among Wallara medicine men is a fish. One who harms her forests, abuses the wealth of her rivers and billabongs, and befouls the land runs the risk of being cursed and of becoming a *gondaman*, a frilled lizard condemned to wander the outback and perish under the hunter's boomerang.

Guwarris: These are Barramundje's spirit servitors. Guwarris sometimes take the shape of a fish, a platypus, or a kookaburra to watch over rivers and billabongs. Guwarris have the game statistics and abilities of nixies. Medicine men say it is bad luck to disturb waters known to be inhabited by guwarris.

Genjoo, The Crocodile Spirit—(alias Ka). Genjoo's sphere of interest for Wallara lies in the earth, the land, and magical places. Chameleon men say that the rocky outcroppings of the Forbidden Highlands and the *olgas*, great monoliths dotting the outback, are the scaly warts on Genjoo's back. Great rocks are thought of as places of great magic, and entrances to Genjoo's world. Paintings left by the ancient Wallaras can often be found there. Medicine men who honor Genjoo often come to these places to meditate. Legends also say that when one dies in the jaws of a great saltwater crocodile, it is that Genjoo has claimed one's soul and requested it to become his servitor.

Neemes: The neemes are rock spirits, servitors of Genjoo. Their task is to teach chameleon men how to become more attuned to the land and how to protect nature. They are incorporeal and invisible, speaking to the medicine men only through dreams and meditation. Sometimes, they will bring a distressed medicine man's prayers to Genjoo and return with a message.

Warruntam, The Eagle Spirit—(alias Ixion). Warruntam is the patron of hunters, speed, and bravery. His area of interest in Wallara is the element of fire. Chameleon men have rarely invoked Warruntam as a patron of war, since they are a peaceful people, but the Eagle Spirit among all Immortal patrons would come closest to this role, should an actual conflict ever occur. Legends say that those who die from the sky's lightning have been claimed by Warruntam and become his servitors.

Namarkons: These servitors of Warruntam are also known as lightning men. They ride the storm clouds, bringing rain and wind. Their fire destroys that which is ill and weak. Namarkons are incorporeal, invisible spirits that sometimes materialize on Mystara as silver-colored, lawful-aligned *thunderheads* (AC9, page 79). Namarkons can otherwise take the shape of medicine men with the same number of hit dice.

Chameleon men as PCs

Chameleon men are distantly related to dragons. From them, they inherited several innate magical powers. An adult tribesman has the ability to *vanish*, which is roughly equivalent to the *dimension door* spell. The difference lies in its shorter range (120′ instead of 360′). Also, because it is a racial ability, chameleon men never accidentally materialize into solid objects. However, for game balance, this ability counts as a full action and should require an Intelligence check every time it is used.

At 3rd level, a chameleon man can truly *mimic* its surroundings. The chameleon man effectively turns invisible as per the mage spell. Although the chameleon man can use this ability at will, any number of times in a day, he must remain absolutely quiet and motionless when doing so (he cannot cast spells, talk, attack, dodge, move, *vanish*, etc). Chameleon men have perfected the ability to remain motionless for extended periods of time (up to an hour per experience level). *Mimicry* only fools other races—chameleon men can always see one another.

At 7th level, a chameleon man can *dream*. Once this ability has been used, it cannot be used again for seven days. The *dream* allows the chameleon man to tap into mystical knowledge of Wallara spirits. At the chameleon man's option, the *dream* can imitate the effects of one of the following clerical spells: *speak with animal*, *speak with the dead*, *speak with plants*, *commune*, or *speak with monsters*. *Dreaming* requires the chameleon man to meditate for 1d6 rounds, plus the time spent communicating. The meditation requires live embers (from a small campfire for example). *Dreams* cannot be used against hostile creatures unless such creatures are restrained in some manner.

Medicine Men: Chameleon men of Wallara have their own types of spell-casters, called medicine men. These gifted people are identified at birth by other medicine men. They learn their first spell when they become adults (level 0), Medicine men can cast clerical and druidic spells, but cannot turn undead. In order to cast a spell, medicine men need a small piece of quartz or opal that is consumed when the spell is cast. Supplies of these minerals can usually be acquired in caverns, near great rocks, or in the Forbidden Highlands. They must perform a corroboree (fire ceremony) to recover their spells.

Medicine men also can use their *dream* ability to imitate the effects of the druidic *control weather* or *creeping doom* spells. Medicine men can always sense if a place is often visited by spirit servitors of their chosen Immortal patron (60' radius). As an option, adult medicine men also acquire special clerical powers specific to their chosen Immortal patron, as described on page 13 of the "Codex of the Immortals" in *the Wrath of the Immortals* boxed set. If the Star Dragon is the chosen patron, give the medicine men a permanent *protection from evil* rather than a +2 bonus to turn undead.

Miscellaneous: Chameleon men were originally described in AC9 *Creature Catalog*, pages 33-34. Chameleon men are poor swimmers (requiring a skill slot to learn how to swim). Chameleon men do not have *infravision* and their natural armor class is 9 like humans. They strongly dislike armor as it cancels both their ability to *vanish* and to *mimic*. They use stone or bone daggers, spears with stone edges, clubs, and—for the typical Wallara—the boomerang. Chameleon men have racial modifiers to their game statistics, as shown in Table 4.

Language: If you haven't caught on by now, the best way to imitate Wallara lingo would be to pick a good map of the land down-under, and check for native names. Grab a bunch, shake well, and there you have it—but beware! You might very well end up creating true words with ludicrous meanings!

Chameleon men also can use the changing colors of their skin to show feelings. Proper usage of shades and hues is a sign of wisdom and social status among chameleon men.

Chameleon men: AC 9, HD 2*, MV 120′ (40′), AT 1 weapon, D by weapon, Save as F2, ML 7, TT (Q + S) E, AL Neutral (any for PCs), XPV 25. Size: 7′ tall.

Thunderheads: AC 0, HD 16** (or 8 outside storms), MV 30′ (10′), 180′ (60′) flying, AT 2 claws or *lightning bolt*, D 2d6/2d6 or 5d6, NA 0 (1-3), Save as F16 (or F8 outside storms), ML 9, TT Nil, Int 5, AL L, XP 4,050 (or 1,750 with 8 HD). *Load:* 3,500 cn at full speed; 7,000 cn at half-speed. *Barding Multiplier:* x 3.

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Boomerang: This is the fabled weapon of the Wallara. It is a curved wooden missile that returns to its owner if it hits neither target nor obstacles. With an enc. of 50 cn, a good boomerang can be worth many wallaroo pelts (say 10 gp worth in the game).

Wallara medicine men can enchant boomerangs as +1 weapons. A magical boomerang flies in a figure-eight when it is thrown. If it misses the target and does not hit anything else, the magical boomerang will take a second pass at the target at the end of the round. If the target is unaware of the boomerang's return, the boomerang then gets a +2 attack bonus for a back attack.

If a boomerang does not hit anything during the round, it then returns to the owner. If not distracted (by attacks from foes for example), the owner can catch his returning boomerang automatically. With a successful Dexterity check a distracted owner can catch a returning boomerang. Opponents cannot catch an incoming boomerang unless they have a higher mastery level than the boomerang's owner, and they roll a successful Dexterity check. This all assumes that either or both the owner of the boomerang and the target remain within the boomerang's flight path during the entire round.

Boomerang users of Expert Skill or better can aim at a target hiding behind an obstacle (like a tree). The boomerang may hit that target on the returning segment of its flight only, with a -2 attack penalty (no back attack advantage here).

Boomerangs are made specifically for a user of a given strength and height. If a boomerang is picked up by someone with a different Strength score or a different size, attack rolls should be penalized by -2. Finally, a boomerang can be used to light a fire by rubbing its hard edge on a dry log.

Note: Don't forget to apply the Hit Roll bonuses from the table on page 76 of the D&D Rules Cyclopedia. Stun is explained on page 81 of the same book.

Shields: Chameleon men do not normally carry shields. However, quarrels do occur at times and medicine men allow two forces with an equal number of chameleon men and comparable armament to do battle to settle their dispute. Shields are used at that time. They are medium-sized shields, made of wood and bark, offering the usual AC protection. *Shields +1* exist that match the owner's *mimicry* ability. Tribal leaders are likely to own one. Note: Nonmagical shields do hamper a chameleon man's *vanishing* and *mimicry* abilities. Chameleon men are otherwise free to use any magical protection other than armor to improve their AC. Ω

Wrath of the Immortals boxed set errata

On page 69 of Book Two *(The Immortals' Fury)* in this set, the title "Immortals Showdown" should appear just before the last paragraph at the bottom of column one.



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by Skip Williams

SAGE advice

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The sage continues exploring the untold reaches of optional material for the AD&D® 2nd Edition game. This month, we have a short look at psionic powers. Unless otherwise stated, page numbers refer to *The Complete Psionics Handbook*.

Does the initial cost of a psionic power cover the maintenance cost of the power for the first round? How about the first turn or hour, for powers with maintenance costs measured in turns or hours?

A character never has to pay both a power's initial and maintenance cost; it's one or the other. Although the rules are not completely clear on the point, the text on page 14 that details maintaining powers leads me to believe that any power that is maintained turn by turn or hour by hour requires PSP expenditure by the turn or hour rather than by the round. In these cases, the initial PSP expenditure keeps the power going for the first turn or hour. However, the DM™ is free to assume that the initial cost can sustain the power for only the first round, and can require that maintenance costs be paid starting the next round. The former interpretation requires fewer PSPs than the latter, but since maintenance costs by the turn or hour are fairly low, it doesn't make much difference which way you decide to do things as long you treat all powers the same way.

Can a character using Clairaudience or Clairvoyance scry a place not personally known to him?

Yes, he can. The only limitations on these powers are the PSPs available to the character and the power check, which gets more difficult as the distance to the location to be scryed increases. The DM should use some common sense when allowing the character to choose an area to be scryed. For example, the character cannot just declare he is eavesdropping on the wizard Drawmij's library unless he actually knows where that library is, either through personal knowledge or by making an educated guess. On the other hand, the character can monitor an area just by describing it in general terms. For example, the character can declare that he is scrying the spot exactly 10 miles to his west, or the topmost room in a tower he has seen.

Does a three-pound weapon suffer a -1 penalty to THAC0 when used with Telekinesis?

No. Although the formula for calculating a character's THAC0 when attacking with a telekinetically controlled weapon is equal to the weapon's power-score penalty (weight in pounds divided by three), objects weighing three pounds or less have no power-score penalty and therefore no THAC0 penalty.

Is the modifier for Animate Object subtracted from the psionicist's Intelligence score, as listed in the power description, or from the power score?

The modifier is made to the power score, The "Ability Score Modifier" heading in the power's description is a typo.

Is Control Body a science? It is listed as a devotion, but its description says it's a science. Life Draining is listed as a science, but its text describes it as a devotion.

Control Body is a Psychokinetic devotion. Life Draining is a Psychometabolic science.

How tall can a fire animated with the Control Flames devotion be? For example, since the area of effect is 10 square feet, can a character create a mock fire elemental 2' wide, 2' long, and 24' high?

If you follow the description to the letter, area of effect for Control Flames refers to the two-dimensional area covered by the fire's fuel. The mock fire elemental in your example would be possible only if the fuel covered 10 square feet or less and the flames were 24' high, which might be possible if there were some sort of forced draft fanning the fire. When faced with a very large fire, say a multifloor building aflame, the psionicist can control only the flames erupting from a 10-square foot area. Note that 10 square feet is not a very big area—it's 5' by 2' or 2½' by 4', or some combination of dimensions that can be multiplied together to equal 10'. Compare this with a standard 10'x10' square on a dungeon map, which is 100 square feet. To make this devotion more useful, you might want to increase its area or give it a cubic area, say anything from 25 cubic feet (5'x5'x1') to 100 cubic feet (10'x10'x1').

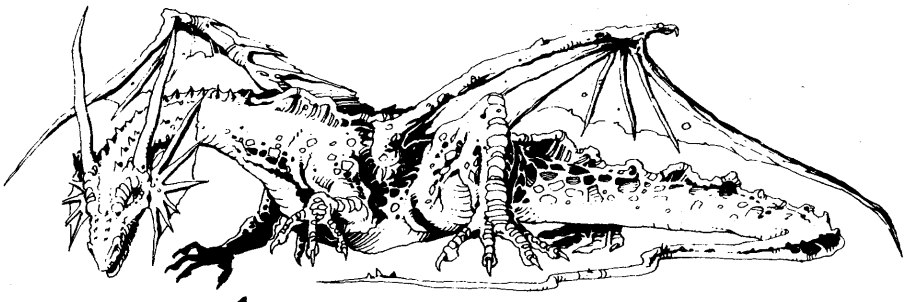
Is the power score for the Create Sound devotion Intelligence -7, as stated in the description, or is it Intelligence -2, as stated in the summary on page 125?

It is Intelligence -7. The -2 modifier in the summary is an obvious typo when you consider that the power score for the very similar Control Sound Psychokinetic devotion is Intelligence -5.

According to the description of the Disintegrate science on page 40, an Inertial Barrier protects against psionic disintegration. Does an Inertial Barrier also protect against magical disintegration? Does an Inertial Barrier protect against *magic missile* spells, fire, or breath weapons?

An Inertial Barrier protects the user against disintegration from any source. The rules don't explain why, but here's my best guess: Disintegration destroys matter by setting up a vibration that causes objects and creatures to break into microscopic pieces and fly apart; an Inertial Barrier dampens the vibration and disrupts the effect.

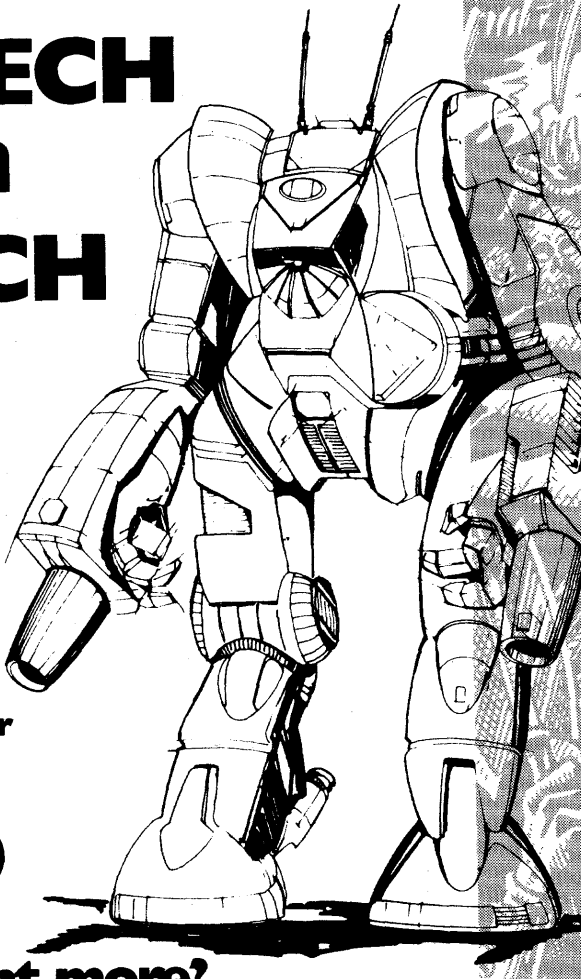
The "missiles" created by a *magic missile* spells are purely magical and are not affected by Inertial Barriers. While an Inertial Barrier does not confer fire resistance, it can foil most fire-based attacks by keeping flames from reaching the user. That is, the user is protected against *fireball* spells, but still can get burned if he walks into a burning building or pool of molten lava. As explained in the devotion's description (see page 46), Inertial Barriers can be effective against *some* breath weapons, but not all. Breath weapons that are composed of pure heat, light, cold, electricity, or other forms of energy are not affected. Gas, acid, or flame breath weapons and any breath weapon that involves hurling or projecting some kind of matter



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are affected. When dealing with very powerful breath weapons, such as dragon breath weapons, I suggest that you allow the Inertial Barrier user to roll only the basic dice, not dice plus bonuses. For example, if an adult red dragon breathes through an Inertial Barrier, the defender rolls 12d10 vs. the dragon's 12d10+6. Assume that the plus represents the intrinsic power (heat, acidic potency, etc.) of what part of the breath does penetrate the Inertial Barrier.

Why would anyone bother to learn the Absorb Disease devotion when Cell Adjustment can cure diseases more quickly, with lower PSP expenditure, and without recourse to the Complete Healing science? Why would anyone absorb a magical disease when Complete Healing cures only normal diseases?

It is true that Cell Adjustment cures diseases faster and "cheaper" than the Absorb Disease/Complete Healing combination. However, sometimes a character isn't free to choose his psionic powers. Characters with wild talents, for example, have to take what they get. Also, even though the Complete Healing description mentions only "normal diseases" (see page 50), the text in the Absorb Disease description on page 54 strongly implies that Complete Healing should handle any malady that can be absorbed; this includes magical diseases such as mummy rot but not lycanthropy (which also is a curse).

Does the Cell Adjustment devotion cure one point of damage when initiated if there is no disease to cure? Can the psionicist immediately spend 20 PSPs to cure four points of damage during the first round he uses the power if there is no disease to cure?

The psionicist can use the initial five PSPs to cure one point of damage if the Cell Adjustment recipient doesn't have a disease. However, the psionicist must spend one round getting the power established before he can start healing a lot of damage. Basically, the psionicist needs a minute or so to assess the patient's condition before he can start making extensive repairs.

Can a character use Body Equilibrium to keep from sinking once he has fallen into water or quicksand? It is possible for a character to use Body Equilibrium along with Control Wind to levitate or fly?

Since Body Equilibrium can be activated while the psionicist is falling (see the devotion's description on pages 55-56), I don't see any reason not to allow its use while sinking. The DM might choose to impose a power-score penalty, since it might be difficult to focus one's inner energies with a nose and mouth full of quicksand; I suggest an additional -1 to -4. In this case, the character will simply bob to the surface of the water or quicksand, where he probably can swim or slither to safety. Actually regaining one's feet and walking on the surface after being submerged and popping up like a cork would require considerable luck and dexterity.

A falling character using Body Equilibrium certainly could use Control Wind to influence where he lands. However, it would be quite difficult to slow a fall or to lift a grounded character using Control Wind, as the character must have an updraft to lift him. This would be impossible in still air. If the character found a strong thermal—on a sunlit hillside, for example—he might be able to increase and control the naturally occurring updraft enough to lift him, then glide to a landing some distance away. Note that such a feat would require ideal conditions; the character probably would have to be outside during a sunny day and on terrain that can create rising currents of warm air—open fields, rocky areas, and the like. Bodies of water don't generate thermals at all, and forests create very weak ones. This feat might also be possible indoors in chimneys, ventilation shafts, and other places where there is a lot of rising air. Ω

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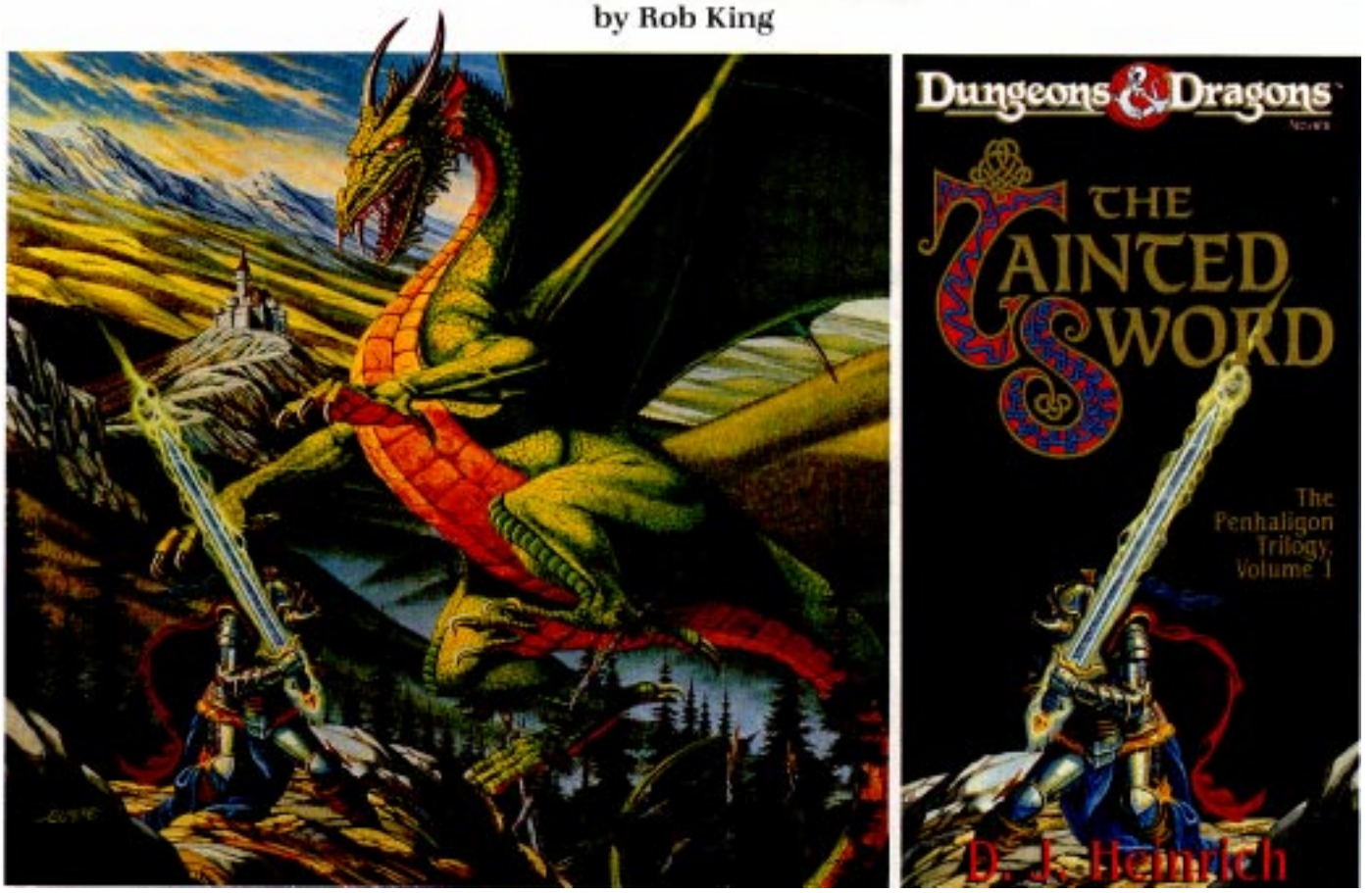
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NOVEL IDEAS

by Rob King



This September sets a milestone for fantasy games and novels from TSR. With the launch of *The Tainted Sword*, the first book in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS™ novel line, millions of avid D&D® game players will have fantasy novels written specifically for them.

What a launch it will be! *The Tainted Sword* features a gatefold back cover, two flyleaf spreads with full-color art by Larry Elmore, and three pages of full-color, hand-painted maps. In addition, *The Tainted Sword* kicks off not only a new novel line, but also the first D&D™ novel trilogy: the Penhaligon Trilogy, named after the region of the D&D Known World where the novel takes place.

In *The Tainted Sword*, author D. J. Heinrich tells the tale of Johauna, a young woman seeking to become a squire—and eventually a knight—in the chivalrous Order of the Three Suns. She meets an embittered knight, once Flinn the Mighty but now Flinn the Fallen. Jo tries to convince Flinn that his glory can be reattained through pursuit of the Quadrivial, the four knightly virtues. The fourth of these virtues, Glory, can be attained by Flinn only if he slays the great green dragon Verdilith, the scourge of Penhaligon. *The Tainted Sword* tells of Flinn's search for honor, an adventure fraught with lightning-quick swordplay, arcane magicks, deadly monsters, and, of course, a dragon.

As the first novel in the new D&D novel line, *The Tainted Sword* embodies the ethic and direction of the whole D&D line. D&D novels target the same genre that made the D&D game the most popular role-playing game in the world: high fantasy. Stories of high fantasy feature the conflict between good and evil, the heroic battle against overwhelming odds, the value of virtue and honor, the mystery of magic, the wonder of communing with strange creatures, and the power of dragons. *The Tainted Sword* exhibits the sort of desperate optimism that marks all works of this genre, most notably the work that began it all: *The Lord of the Rings*.

Although it embodies the elements of classic high fantasy, *The Tainted Sword* is fundamentally a story about people and beings: Jo, Flinn, the wild boy Dayin, the wizardess Karleah, and the green wyrm Verdilith. From the books conception to the typesetting of its final page, *The Tainted Sword's* characters leapt from the pages and took on lives of their own. When asked about the source of these strong characters, author D. J. Heinrich replied, "The characters are me. Good or bad, I have been each of those characters at some point in my life. Kind of schizophrenic, I know—scary, too, especially when my face and hands start physically expressing what I'm writing."

Whereas the first book in the Penhaligon Trilogy focuses on the quest of Flinn the Mighty, the second book, *The Dragon's Tomb*, traces Johauna's search for knighthood. Heinrich responds whimsically to questions about the characters' destinies in *The Dragon's Tomb:* "They all jump off a cliff and plunge to their deaths three thousand feet below. Really, how should I know what happens to them? Their lives aren't all mapped out for them. They live whatever they go through on the day I write about them. They're *real* people to me. When Jo lashes out in anger, I do, too. When Karleah cackles aloud at some joke she's just made at Braddoc's expense, I do,

TSR's oldest game becomes its newest book line!

too. When Dayin cries over his bastard of a father, I do, too. All I can say is this: The characters will *live.*"

Heinrich describes the process of writing *The Tainted Sword* in the way that others describe a tax audit. "Every word was pure agony," Heinrich said, laughing. "Take note, would-be authors: Writing a book is harder than . . . well. harder than anything I've ever done. I had two editors on *The Tainted Sword*, and I'm sure both privately thought I was loony. But with their help, the book survived its author!"

Perhaps the difficulty of writing a novel is what made Heinrich's favorite author, Taylor Caldwell, write the "morose, morbid, and depressing" novels Heinrich enjoys most. Although Heinrich's novel is far from morose, morbid, and depressing, Caldwell's dogged persistence in writing 800-page novels and apparently using the whole dictionary in each one inspired Heinrich to success.

However, even Caldwell's influence knows its bounds. Heinrich says, "Though I like Taylor Caldwell, I don't draw much inspiration from anyone, except maybe from me. Most everything I write about—at least the feelings, the tears, the terror, and the love—is something I've experienced firsthand."

Geographical features, like characters, will feel the heavy tread of destiny. Taking place just prior to the world-shattering events in the *Wrath of the Immortals* boxed set, *The Tainted Sword* does no irreversible damage to the landscape, though Heinrich established a few villages, orc encampments, and notable mountain peaks for the express purpose of destroying them.

In books to come

The Penhaligon Trilogy is the auspicious beginning of the D&D novel line. Bruce Heard, guru of the D&D game at TSR, notes, "The Known World is perhaps the richest, most diverse fantasy setting TSR has." These lands contain scores of unique landscapes and peoples, many like those in real-life history and in history the way it could have been. The Known World has countless stories waiting to be told.

TSR has been talking with fantasy-fiction heavy-hitters Doug Niles and Troy Denning to get them to tell some of those stories in trilogies that will follow on the heels of the Penhaligon books. Niles, fresh from writing the Druidhome Trilogy for the FORGOTTEN REALMS® shared world, is hungry for new territory in a high-fantasy setting. Denning, meanwhile, has spent his last five books in the forbidding climes of Athas, the DARK SUN™ world. Rumors say he's uncovered some mythical beasts in his Athasian research that he's just itching to write about.

For now, we have the fanfare and glory of *The Tainted Sword* (released in October 1992), *The Dragon's Tomb* (April 1993), and *The Death of Magic* (September 1993). The next D&D novel trilogies are pleasant foretastes of what else is to follow from TSR book lines. Ω

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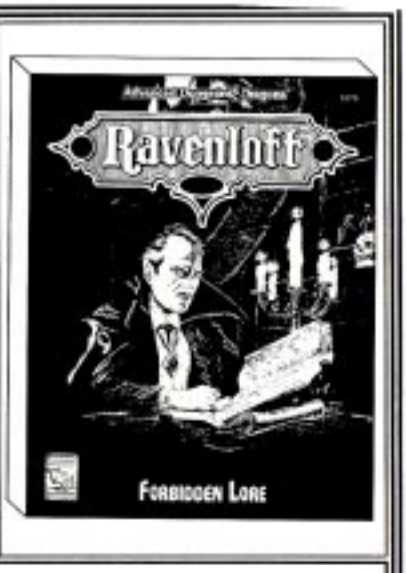
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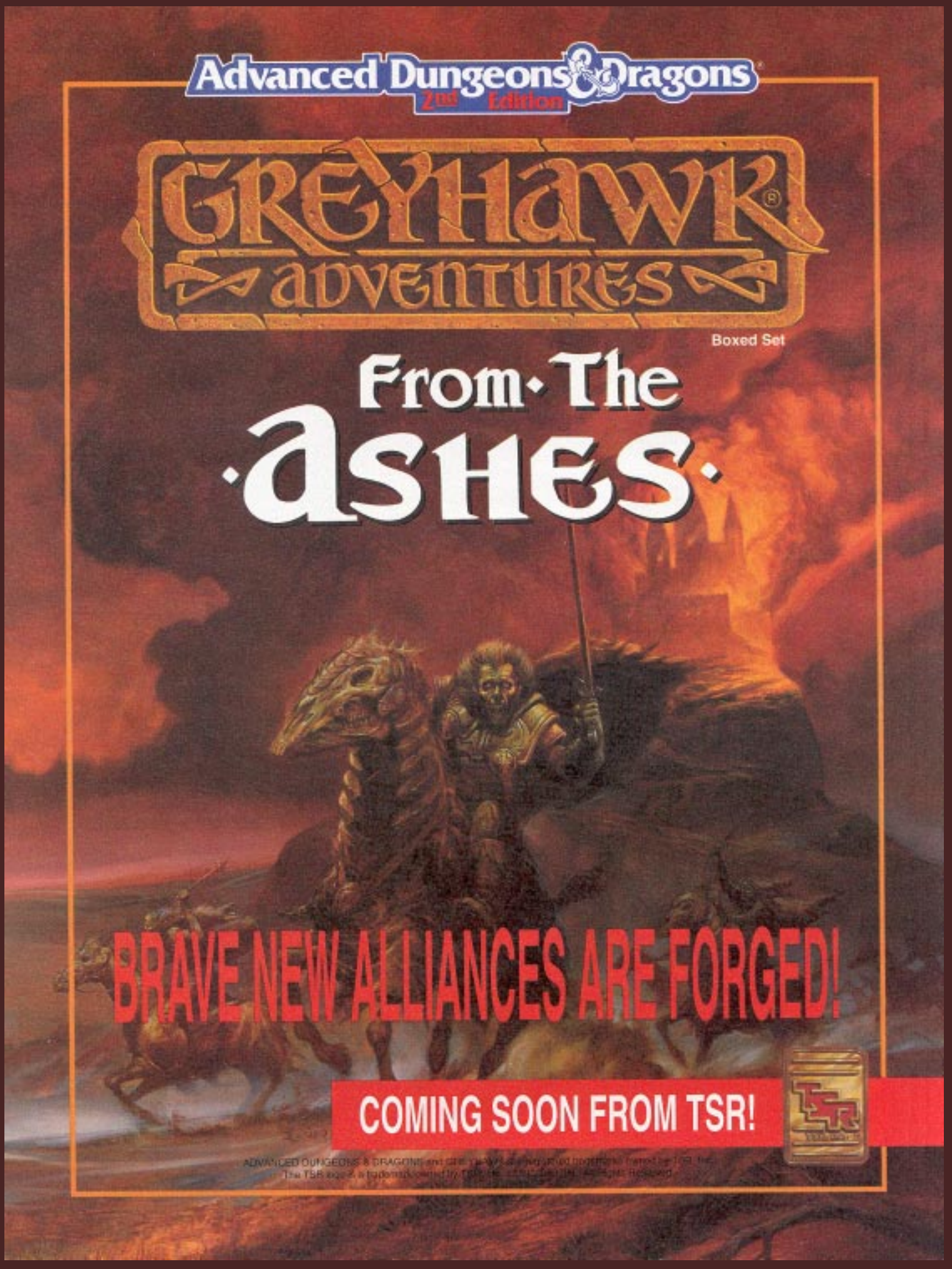
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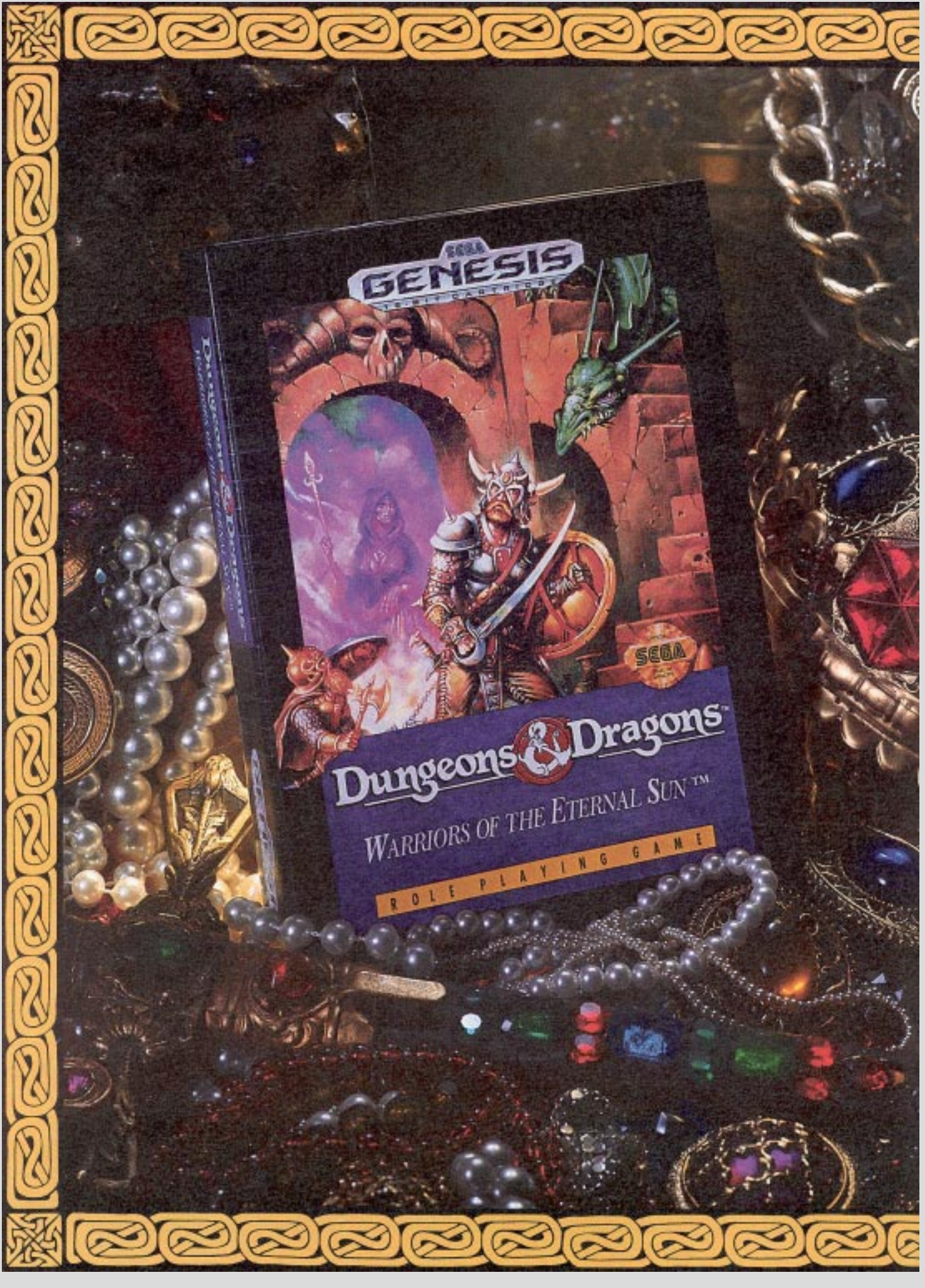
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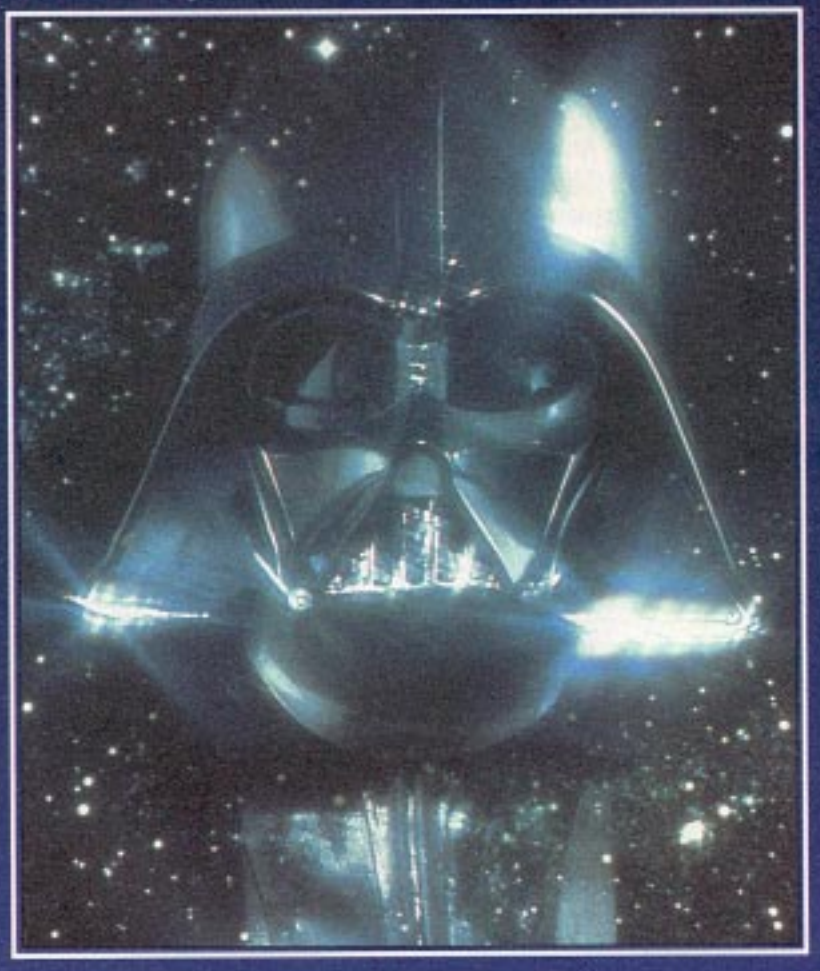
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by Kevin Troy

Artwork by *Lissanne Lake*

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Know your sources

The simplest way to toughen up your adventures without being unfair or unrealistic is to know all the rules you are playing with. Optional rules, new spells, magical items, and monsters should all be known to you. This may seem obvious, but I for one know the benefits of buying all the optional rulebooks (such as the Complete Handbooks or sets specialized to one setting) and convincing the DM to play with those rules. Many a DM has fallen to heart-rendering ideas for a wood-elf ranger with the berserker kit. Don't let the play-



ers use their knowledge against you!

If buying optional rules is too expensive for you, look in used-book stores or the used-materials section of a mail-order catalog. If this doesn't work, borrow the book from the player using it against you. Take a week or so to familiarize yourself with it, then borrow it again whenever you think you may need it (for instance, when you're creating an adventure).

If worst comes to worst, tell your players that those optional rules are not being used in your campaign. Nothing hurts a pampered player more than creating a lst-level character using Method I (3d6 straight) and only the core rules in the hardbound manuals.

If you do get the optional rulebooks, use them just as much as the players do. Don't make that Red Wizard of Thay a wimp—give him class! Barbarian chieftains should not be mere 5th-level fighters, they should be 5th-level berserkers with weapon specialization. The same goes for campaigns using the AD&D 1st Edition game. If you are using the classic older modules, update them using *Unearthed Arcana* rules (new spells and weapon specialization rules being the most important).

Go through your modules and check for weaknesses in those NPCs with character classes. For example, here are the elite guards at the temple of Bane in Zhentil Keep, as described in the AD&D module *Curse of the Azure Bonds* on page 56:

6th-level fighters (18): AC 4; MV 6"; HD 6; hp 45; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (long sword); AL LE; THAC0 15.

Get real! Many 3rd-level adventuring fighters are outfitted better than that. Let's assume that any warrior that gets up to 1st-level is going to specialize (here, with the long sword). Then, too, a 6th-level fighter (not to mention the temple of Bane itself) is probably wealthy. Give the guards plate mail armor (which by itself is AC 3, better protection than chain mail and a shield) and exceptional quality weapons from the *Complete Fighter's Handbook*, page 10 (these add one point each to THAC0 and damage). Missile weapons would be appropriate as well: either a light crossbow with 20 bolts or a long bow and 20 sheaf arrows per fighter.

Also, one should allow for the benefits described in the "Combat Rules" chapter of *the Complete Fighter's Handbook*. Most useful of these are the weapon-style specializations. In the above case, I would give the guards either the single-weapon style with two proficiency slots devoted to it (thus gaining a +2 bonus to their armor classes as opposed to the one from a shield—see page 62) or two-weapon style with ambidexterity (thus giving an extra attack per round—see page 64). I favor the latter, as the guards' armor classes are already each one better from the armor boost we gave them. Besides, these guards will presumably serve in an offensive capacity (and a +2 bonus to armor class on a short-lived guard is not as beneficial as an extra attack per round) and they already have good life spans in combat because of their above-average hit points.

Here are the same fighters, now greatly improved:

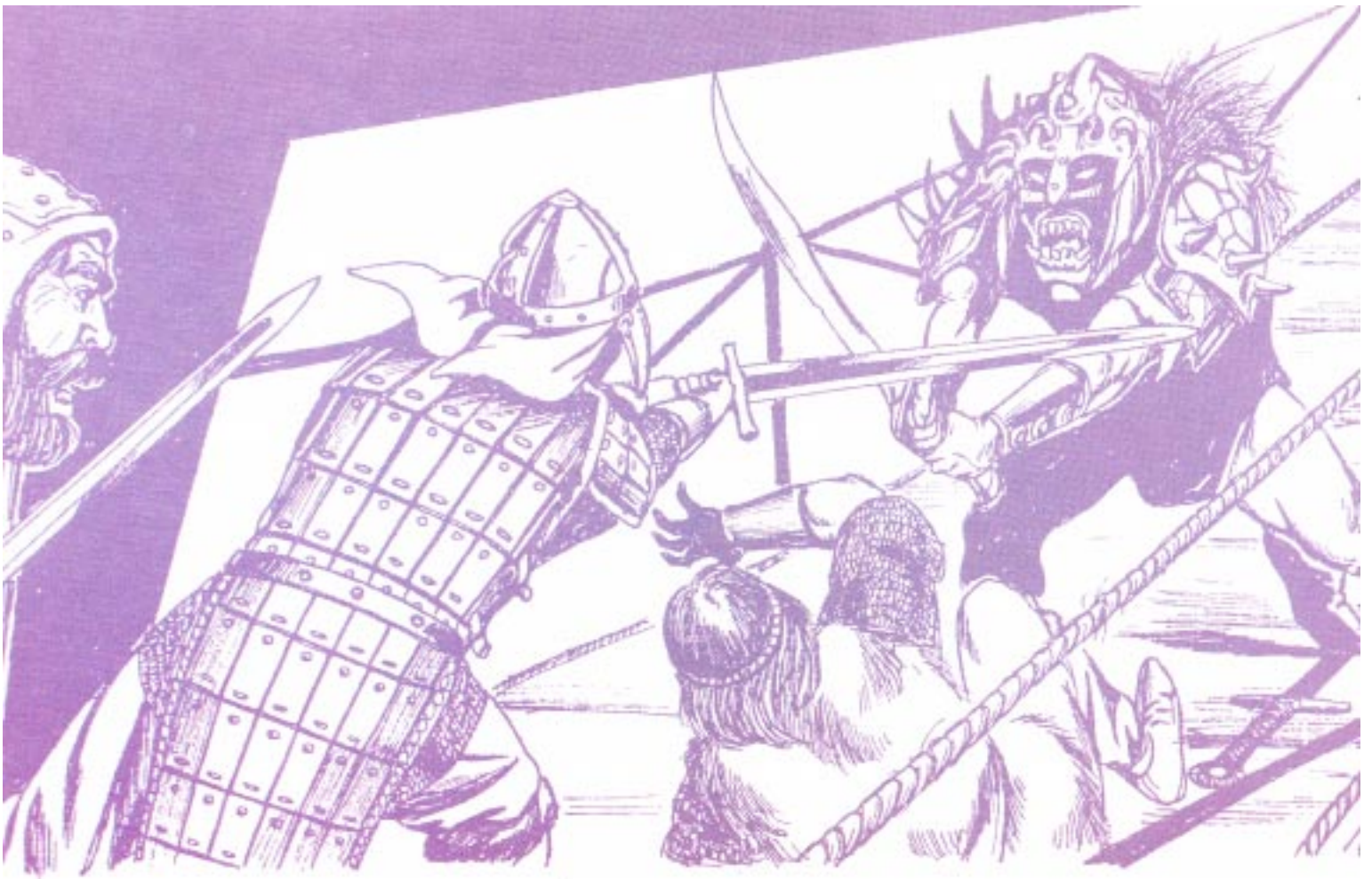
6th-level fighters (18): AC 3; MV 6"; HD 6; hp 45 each; #AT 5/2; Dmg 1d8+2 (long sword) or 1d8 (bows); SA paired swords (weapon spec.), missile weapons (sheaf arrows); SD none; AL LE; THAC0 13.

One note about exceptional quality weapons: While they improve your NPCs by far, they are hardly worth the PCs' time and effort to carry them around. Chances are that a 5th-level character already has a better (i.e., magical) weapon, and toting an extra long sword around all day is hardly worth the encumbrance.

Managing magic

Magic deserves beefing up as well. If you get a rules manual that has an awesome new megadeath spell in it, change your NPC's spell book to make room for it. The same goes for a devious new use for an old spell (see Joel E. Roosa's article "Creative Casting" in DRAGON® issue #169 and the *Complete Wizard's Handbook*, pages 82-86, for examples.)

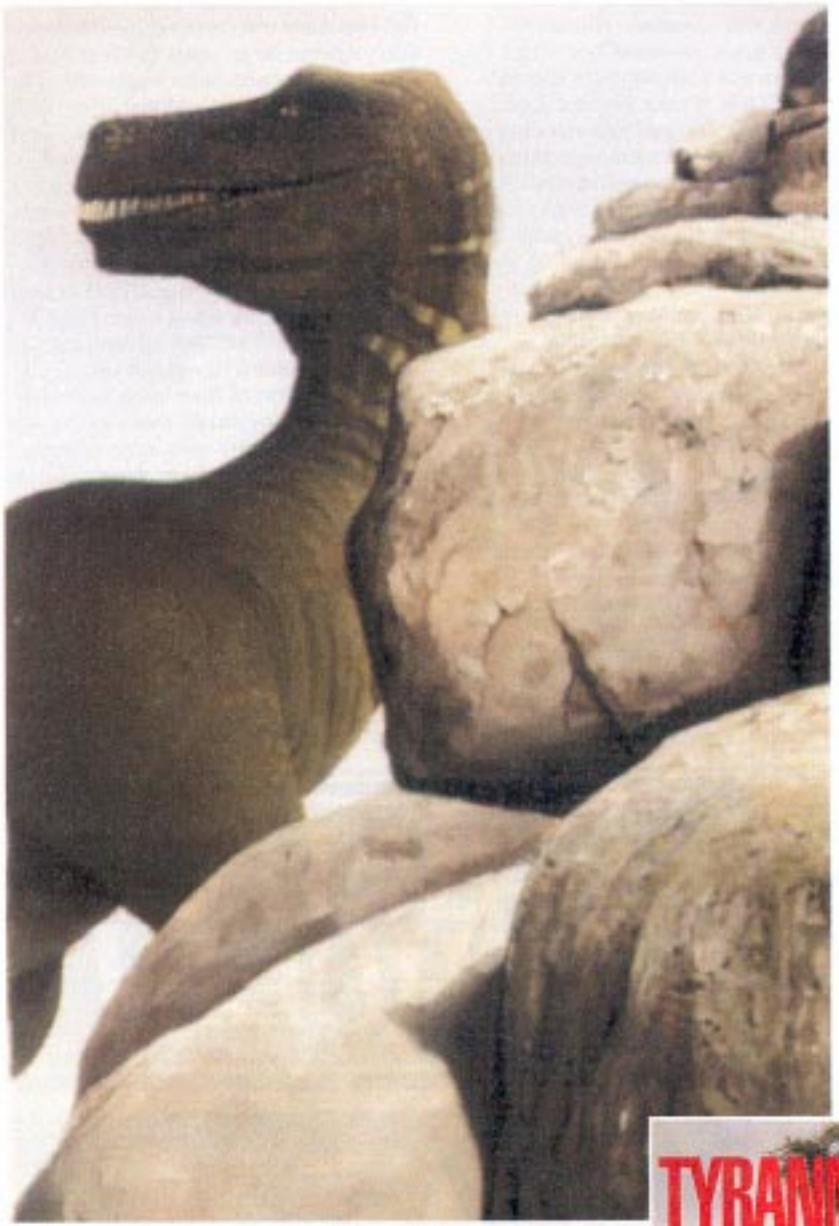
For example, if you are running a



Artwork by James Holloway

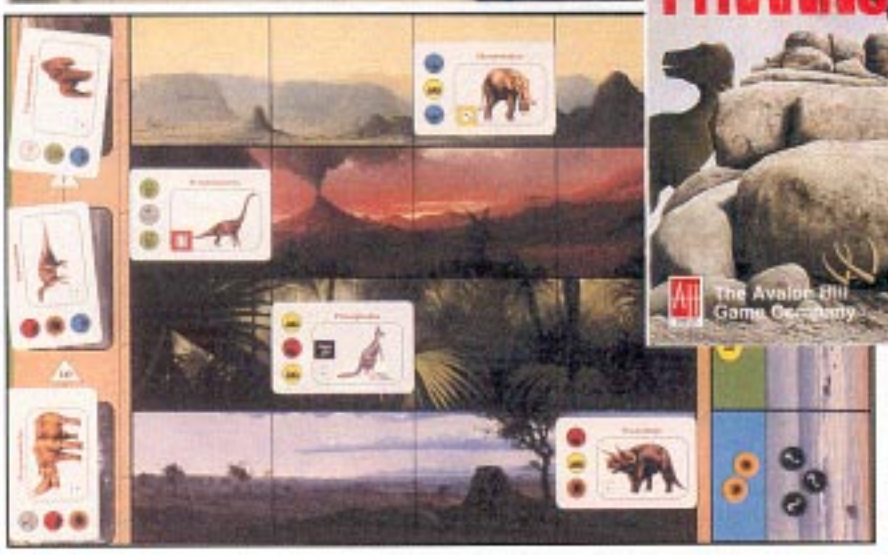
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FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign, you may wish to replace *Melf's acid arrow* in most NPC spell lists with the superior spell *Agannazar's scorcher*, from the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* hardbound. Whereas the first spell affects one target, requires a to-hit roll, and splits its damage over several rounds (doing 2d4 hp damage each round), the second spell does 3d6 hp damage per round for two rounds with no save and an automatic hit. *Agannazar's scorcher* can also catch others in the jet (for less damage, however). The only real benefit in the short run (which matters most in combat) to *Melf's acid arrow* is the range benefit (180 yards to a puny 20 yards).

When it comes to NPC spell memorization, use common sense. If the characters stormed the first level of a wizards dungeon yesterday, the wizard will most likely be prepared with a few more offensive spells than usual. However, if the wizard knows that the characters have some type of fire-resistance spell or magical item, he will not memorize *fireball*. Any wizard or priest worth his spell components will set *alarm* spells, *glyphs of warding,* and, in the case of the very powerful individuals, a few nasty magical traps using *contingency* or a *guards and wards* spell. Finally, if a mage doesn't want to destroy his precious tower with mass destruction spells, he won't use *lightning bolt* unless necessary. Take the motives of NPCs into mind.

Expand your horizons

Another simple idea for beefing up NPCs and monsters is to use "weird" or rare magical items and monsters. DRAGON® Magazine is a great source of both. The various *Monstrous Compendium* appendices are useful, too, if your players don't have them. (Many of those monsters are so rare no one would ever memorize them all anyway.) Other good monster sources are the AD&D 1st Edition monster books. The FIEND FOLIO® and *Monster Manual II* books have some great monsters that were never carried over into the AD&D 2nd Edition game. (The "fiend" nobles aren't the only monsters worth retrieving, either, Try using a drelb from *Monster Manual II* on a party of characters who are afraid of wraiths, or a froghemoth on a boating expedition.)

Don't tell your players what an item or monster really is when they find it. Read the tips on running RAVENLOFT® campaigns in "The Techniques of Terror" chapter in the RAVENLOFT boxed set's rulebook. See also Gary Coppa's article, "It's Sort of Like a Wand . . ." in DRAGON issue #161, and "The Game Wizards" column by Bruce Nesmith in DRAGON issue #162. One famous example of this "no information" style can be found in the fantasy novel, *The Sword of Shannara*, by Terry Brooks. Early on, the heroes find the fabled Sword of Shannara but don't even realize what it is until it is stolen by the enemy!

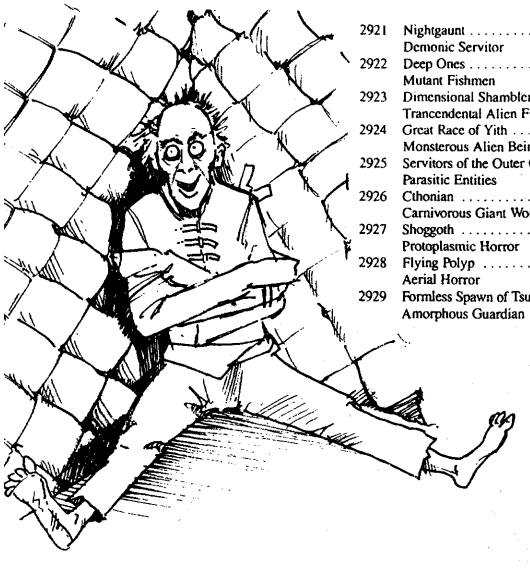
Make your monsters smart enough to fight on their own ground. Real kobolds don't fight in large, open fields at high noon. Real kobolds fight in passages about 3' high with no light and plenty of booby traps. This means the players don't spot the kobolds until the latter are about 30' away (the typical range of torches and light spells), but the PCs are fully aware of the kobolds, thanks to the arrows and traps all around. A fine example of this point can be found in the AD&D module, "Tallow's Deep," by Steve Gilbert and Bill Slavicsek in DUNGEON® Adventures issue #18. Here, goblins have built up a truly deadly dungeon of their own. Note that DUNGEON Adventures' modules are often rife with wonderful new magical items and monsters to spring to your unsuspecting players.

Conclusion

The key to deadly (but by all means fair) DMing in AD&D® games can be summed up like this: Have the NPCs and monsters use the same rules and nifty tricks, tactics, and ploys that the player characters use. You want to make the PCs—and players—sweat. Ω

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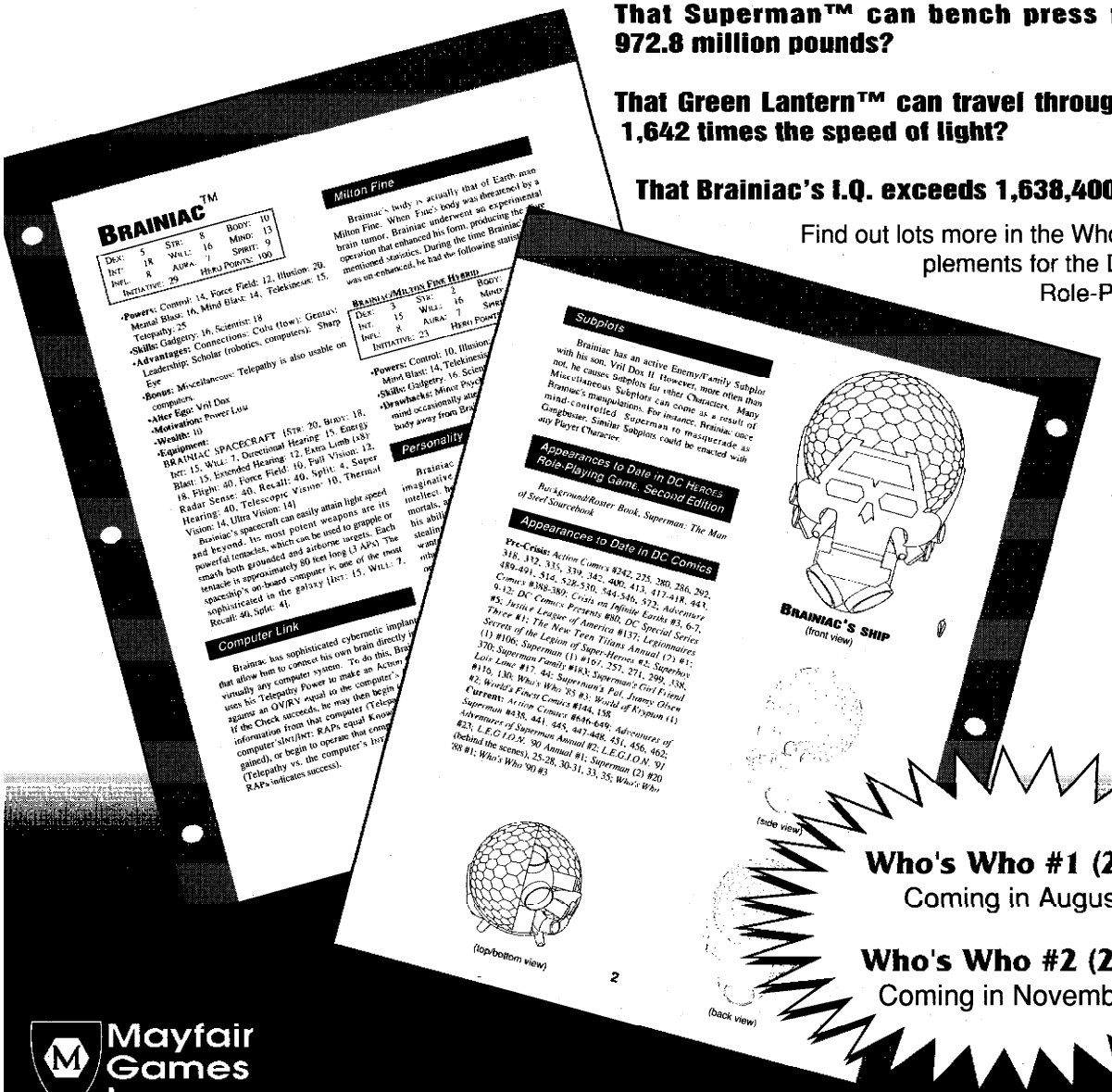
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Welcome to the Neighborhood!

Continued from page 30

of their weapons and gear, they might have to break in to retrieve them. Who knows, the characters might even be after the crown jewels!

Embassies

Any foreign governing body that interacts with the city is likely to have an embassy there in order to protect its interests. A nearby dragon might maintain a building and staff to collect its tribute or to serve as a summer home. A knightly order could maintain a hostel. Friendly or neutral cities will maintain a large building and contingent, filled with spies and surrounded by counterspies.

These buildings are the best places for the characters to get information on foreign lands, customs, and maps. Contacts in these places can be established ("Rogar sent me!") and jobs obtained ("We've been having orc trouble up north.").

Certain expert hirelings might be found through embassies, as well. A nation might be famous for its masons, weavers, or illusionists. A party looking for such a master artisan should check an embassy to see if any of their citizens are in the neighborhood and, if not, how one may be reached.

Libraries and museums

In a fantasy setting, libraries and museums are one and the same, and usually privately owned. Powerful sages, wizards, nobles, magic guilds, and temples are the most likely owners. Characters who want to learn a little about their world would be advised to cultivate these people or organizations in order to gain entry to their collections. One good way would be to make contributions. Magical items, potion ingredients, tomes and scrolls, and even monster descriptions would be appreciated by library owners.

Estates

Powerful NPCs do not always live in castles out in the wilderness. Those who like company and pleasant conversation will maintain residences in town, suitable to their importance. These stately homes, villas, or estates surround the city. They are staffed with servants and perhaps a few men-at-arms. An estate building is not a fortress, nor is it designed to be defended. It will contain the noble's showier treasures (protected against thieves), the noble's family, guest rooms, garden, and a few other amenities. Characters who want to meet with an important NPC call here, rather than at his fortress. In these civilized surroundings, the noble will not challenge the party to a duel or any such nonsense, and topics of mutual interest may be discussed.

Hospices

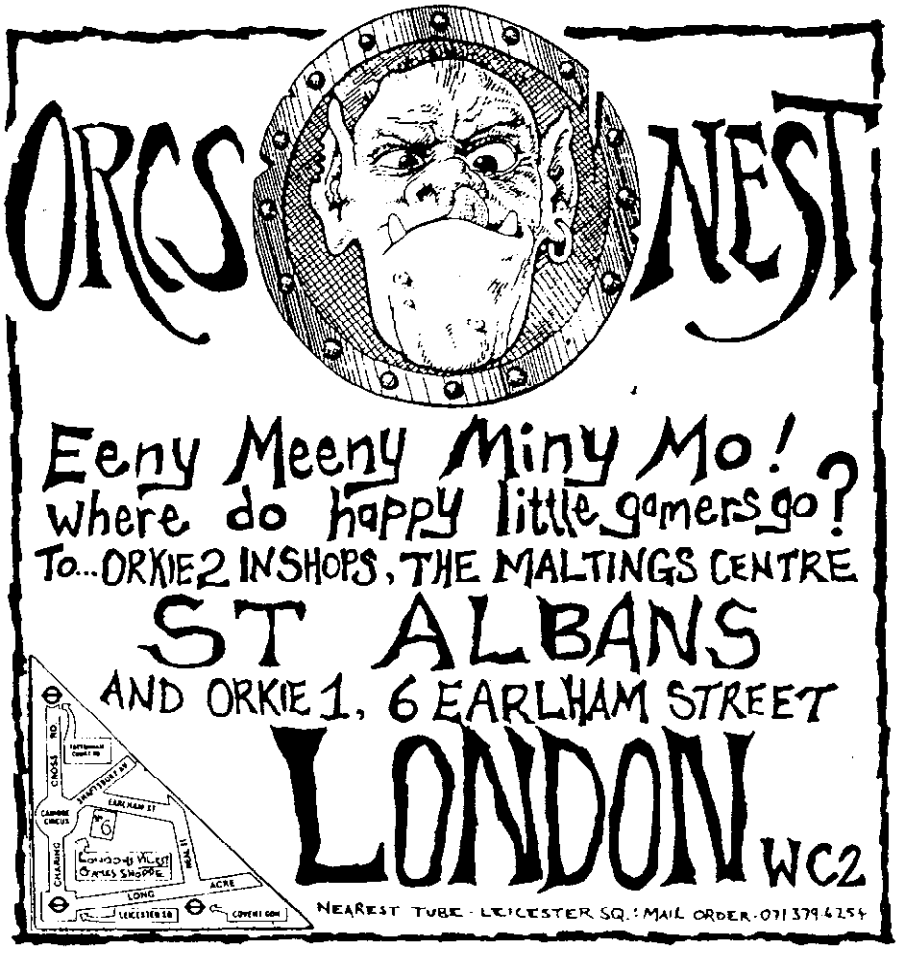
Many inns are reluctant to rent rooms to injured or sick characters, for fear of plague or lawsuits. A character who staggers into town missing a few hit points will find quicker service at a hospice. These institutions are maintained by priests of the gods of healing. They consist of a number of rooms, each with a bed and the same conveniences you would find in an inn. The conditions and service there are excellent, comparable to the finest inns, and there is no rent (though appropriate donations are always accepted). The difference is that they are reserved for the sick. Note that those requiring healing spells go to the temple. The hospice is reserved for those whose ills can be cured by a few days of rest. Characters who wish to make use of this facility should make steady contributions to the temple for a few months prior.

Courts

The PCs are bound to end up in the courthouse one day, after a brawl, crime, or other injustice committed by them, against them, or in their presence. The courthouse will be a large, imposing building, with a large central room and a miniature dungeon. This is where fines will be paid, inquiries made, and criminals held before sentencing.

Conclusion

A city, even a medieval one, is a complex tapestry of neighbors and neighborhoods, each with their own function in the running of the city. The character should find a place for everything, in a neighborhood all its own. Ω





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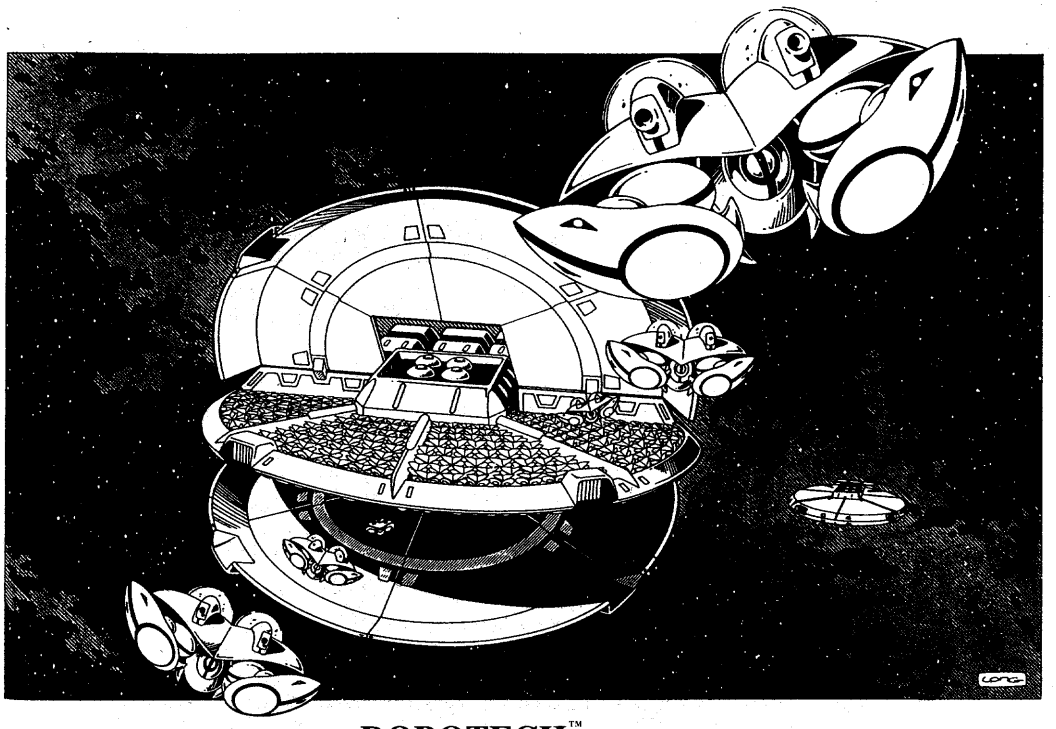
① OK, you'd probably better go for the food as well. ② ...and you haven't got Twin Peaks any more (but you could try Northern Exposure). ③ or any other good games shop...

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by James Lewder

THE MARVEL®-PHILE

Creatures on the prowl

After the downfall of the EC-style horror comic of the 1950s, chock full of entertaining but gruesome deaths and decaying zombies with various body parts missing the comic-book industry scrambled for a less shocking type of monster to fill its rosters. So it was that magazines like *Strange Tales*, in the days before Doctor Strange and the Human Torch, and *Journey Into Mystery*, before the arrival of a certain hammer-toting thunder god, came to be home for creatures of astounding size and even more astounding names—monsters like Kraa the Unhuman; Sporr, the Thing That Could Not Die; Grottu, King of the Insects; and, of course, the ever-popular Fin Fang Foom.

These mammoth menaces proved so successful that Marvel launched two more comics in 1959 to showcase them— *Tales of Suspense* and *Tales to Astonish*. Soon, these books would become the stomping ground for super heroes like Iron Man, Ant-Man, and the Hulk. For a time in the early 1960s though, their pages trembled under the tread of giant feet and echoed with the clatter of crumbling buildings.

As you might suspect, these yarns share a great deal with the "guys-in-rubber-monster-suits" school of Japanese cinema, as well as the radiation-enlarged-insect movies of the 1950s. The standard story involves a gigantic creature either landing on earth if it's an alien beastie, or being awakened by an overly inquisitive explorer or scientist if it's a more local menace. After some prerequisite stomping of the landscape in New York or a small village in eastern Europe, the monster's secret weakness is uncovered. That's part of the Monster's Guild by-laws, it seems: All monsters over 20′ tall must have a debilitating Achilles heel that allows the puny humans of Earth to defeat it. Under no circumstances, though, should this weakness be anything so obvious that it can be uncovered before said monster gets to crush some masonry and maybe even chuck around a car or two—after all, fair's fair.

Monsters on the loose

Releasing a towering mass of scales, claws, and muscle into your MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ campaign every once in a while provides a great change of pace to the standard super standoffs. Scenarios involving these titanic beasts can be resolved easily in a single game session; the typical plot noted above can be worked into any locale. Used creatively, these creatures can be a challenge to even the most powerful super teams.

In an extended campaign against a specific villain, a monster can play the important role of minion. If, for example, the Red Ghost wants to distract a nosy group of heroes who are hot on his trail, he might resurrect the Glop and set him on a rampage throughout eastern Europe. While the heroes save lives and prevent the Glop from crushing Ukraine even flatter than it already is, the Red Ghost will be free to pursue his own nefarious plans.

A light touch is important when running adventures with creatures such as Zzutak and Groot, especially if you want the games to resemble the Lee-Kirby monster epics in the original comics. The evil beasties tend to threaten humans, but generally don't go out of their way to kill them. They will wipe out any tanks and planes the Army or Air Force tosses against them, but are never surprised when the soldiers escape from the burning wreckage. In fact, Marvel monsters are prone to enjoy the sight of fleeing humans. It gives them the chance to laugh maniacally and bellow such classic lines as: **"I am Googam—and I am power!!"** or **"Tremble, mortals, before the awesome might of Gomdulla!"**



Color by Steve Sullivan

GOMDULLA™
The Living Pharaoh

F	EX(20)	Health: 255
A	GD(10)	
S	MN(75)	Karma: 100
E	ShX(150)	
R	AM(50)	Resources: EX(20)
I	GD(10)	
P	IN(40)	Popularity: 0

POWERS:

Body armor: Gomdulla's skin, possibly in conjunction with the seemingly indestructible mummy wrappings he wears, grants him Amazing (50) protection from physical, Force, and Energy attacks.

Levitation: Gomdulla can levitate at will with Incredible (40) power.

Earth control: Though only able to affect stone, Gomdulla has Amazing (50) power in causing stones to move or even fly at his command.

Hibernation: When the stud on Gomdulla's right foot is pressed, he goes into a sort of suspended animation. During this time, he does not age. Any examinations (even psi-probes) conducted on the Living Pharaoh while he is hibernating will reveal nothing of his nature.

TALENTS: Gomdulla is fluent in at least two human languages: English and Egyptian (both ancient and modern).

CONTACTS: The Cult of Gomdulla remains as a very small organization throughout Egypt. It is particularly active outside the major cities. The members are drawn largely from the criminal population, but they are extremely loyal to the Living Pharaoh and provide him with substantial wealth.

HISTORY: In ancient Egypt, during the reign of the pharaohs, a powerful alien landed near the Nile river. This alien, known only as Gomdulla, set about terrorizing the small community around one of the lesser pyramids. While most of the Egyptians rejected Gomdulla's demands for wealth and power, some fell at the alien's feet, proclaiming him the true ruler of the Nile basin.

The alien's reign of terror lasted only a very short time. Freedom fighters infiltrated the Cult of Gomdulla centered in the lesser pyramid, which was unfinished at the time, and discovered his weakness—a stud on the top of his right foot. Pressing the stud immobilized the alien, sending him into deep hibernation.

It remains unclear when Gomdulla was fitted with the mummylike wrappings he wears in modern appearances. Perhaps they are common garb on his planet. It seems more likely that the alien adopted the bandages upon reaching Egypt, intent on hiding his unearthly origins and exploiting the beliefs of the locals. It's also possible that, once they had defeated Gomdulla, the freedom fighters covered the pretender to the pharaoh's throne in the traditional funeral wrappings.

What is clear is Gomdulla was swathed in bandages when archaeologists uncovered him in the early part of the twentieth century. Presumably the wrappings had fused somehow with the alien's skin, for scientists were unable to discover the true nature of the 30'-tall mummy. Gomdulla was dismissed as a hoax by some, discussed as a true mystery by others; in the small museum in Egypt that was his home, however, Gomdulla soon became just another dusty fragment of history.

For at least 40 years, Gomdulla stood motionless in the museum. Finally, in the early 1960s, two small boys playing around the giant's feet fell against the stud and awoke the sleeping alien. Waiting for night to fall and the museum to empty, Gomdulla smashed through the museum's thick stone wall and escaped into the darkness.

It didn't take long for the giant to resurrect the Cult of Gomdulla in the backwater area of Egypt, and within weeks he had taken control of the pyramid once more. His agents began to gather treasure for the newly risen demigod. That Gomdulla, now called the Living Pharaoh, quickly gathered epithets like "the Cruel" and "the Merciless" are testament enough to the type of organization he was building.

The semi-secret Cult of Gomdulla soon came to the attention of Interpol, which assigned an agent to discover the identity of its leaders. The agent got quite a surprise when he found that the missing giant mummy was the cult's focus. In the battle that followed, the Interpol agent escaped death at the alien's hands thanks to the intervention of the cult's high priest. A descendant of the freedom fighters who had dealt with Gomdulla when he first landed in Egypt, the high priest was himself a spy for the forces aligned against the Living Pharaoh. He knew to press the stud hidden by the wrappings on the alien's foot, once again sending Gomdulla into hibernation.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Gomdulla is content with his guise as an Egyptian demigod and will do all he can to hide his extraterrestrial nature. He is cruel and quite a braggart. He will rarely confront foes without proclaiming dire fates for any who dare oppose him. Overly fond of showing off his powers, Gomdulla will never try to hide his strengths. His goals are simple: the collection of wealth and absolute power over as great an area as he can manage.

For modern-day campaigns, you might assume the following to be true: Since his defeat in the sixties, Gomdulla has been passed from Interpol to SHIELD to more mundane scientific operations, but no one has been able to uncover the alien's origin. The most prevalent theory supported by these groups claims that Gomdulla is some sort of renegade super-robot, though the alien technology that created him remains elusive. Some even posit Gomdulla is nothing more than a more advanced model of Rama-Tut's robot warriors. Gomdulla was recently returned to the Egyptian government, which considers the dormant "Living Pharaoh" a national treasure of sorts.

GROOT™
The Monster from Planet X

F	EX(20)	Health: 330
A	GD(10)	
S	ShY(200)	Karma: 120
E	UN(100)	
R	AM(50)	Resources: UN(100)
I	RM(30)	
P	IN(40)	Popularity: 0

POWERS:

Body armor: Groot's thick, barklike skin provides Remarkable (30) protection against physical, Force, and Energy attacks. This armor provides Groot no protection from attacks of normal-sized insects, such as ants or termites, which can easily penetrate the fibers and damage his pulpy interior. This vulnerability also includes characters who can shrink to the size of a small insect.

Flight: Groot can travel through space at Unearthly (100) speeds, during which time he is sheathed in a specialized force field that protects him from the rigors of outer space (no additional life support necessary). This force field provides no other protection and appears as a brilliant yellow luminescence, which sometimes surrounds Groot for days after he lands on a planet.

Growth: Groot can alter his size by absorbing wood. His initial size will be Incredible (20' tall), and for each turn he is allowed to draw wooden objects into his body, he will grow one rank in height, up to Shift Y (50' tall). The process can be reversed, though no wood is expelled from his body in shrinking back to his starting height.

Plant control: Groot exerts Shift X (150) control over all trees and woody flora, a power that functions like the more common form of the *Animate objects* power. He can command timber to accelerate its growth, as well as move like animated servants. Trees will obey his commands without pause, despite biological limitations to the contrary (i.e., pines that walk around to do Groot's bidding will not die from lack of water, etc.).

Resistance to fire and heat: Groot, like all inhabitants of Planet X, has this power at the Remarkable (30) level.

TALENTS: From Planet X, Groot studied the Earth, giving him knowledge of English. He also has Amazing (50) talent in biology and Incredible (40) talent in space sciences.

HISTORY: Returning home from a party, Alice and Leslie Evans witnessed a strange glowing object crash on the outskirts of the small town in which they lived. Because it was late, they decided not to investigate. For the next few days, though, the weird occurrence plagued Leslie, despite his efforts to throw himself into his work as a research biologist.

Only when trees, fences, and other wooden objects began to disappear around town did Leslie give in to his suspicions and go out to investigate the crash site. In the forest, he discovered a glowing wooden giant, 20′ tall and shaped roughly like a huge tree. This monstrous creature was absorbing all the wood he could gather—the trees, the missing fence, barrels, brooms, and even doghouses. And with each bit of wood he absorbed, the creature grew larger.

Evans rushed to warn the town, but it wasn't long before the alien, now 50′ tall, lumbered out of the forest. He announced himself as Groot, monarch of Planet X and overlord of all timber in the galaxy. The plan he had come to institute was simple, but astounding: Groot would command the nearby trees to form a wall around the town, then expand their roots to weave a net beneath it. When that root-net was complete, Groot would order the trees to carry the town into space, out of the solar system, and into the waiting labs on Planet X, where the earthlings would provide ample test subjects for the alien scientists.

Though Groot never revealed how he could make the trees fly into space, the power he exhibited over the local pines and oaks seemed to prove he wasn't bluffing. Under the overlord's command, the trees surrounded the town and their roots started to grow into a net. The town tried to stop Groot—with bullets and even fire—but nothing worked.

Fortunately, Evans thought to confront Groot with a less obvious weapon. Whereas bullets could not penetrate the alien's bark and fire had no effect upon him whatsoever, the special termites Evans bred in his lab made short work of the 50′ tree. With Groot gone, the town hailed Evans as a hero and started the long process of cleaning up after the rampaging flora.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Groot is extremely confident of his abilities—to the point of being smug and reckless. He will boastfully reveal his plans if given the chance and won't shy away from direct conflict with heroes. If the battle begins to turn against him, though, he will quickly summon trees to fight for him.

Groot's plans for stealing a small town or village for scientific experiment on Planet X provide a great springboard for future adventures. Even though the overlord was defeated by Leslie Evans in the early 1960s, his successor on Planet X might come to Earth to kidnap another village. With all the resources of Planet X behind him, the new monarch might even be equipped with modified armor that cannot be breached by insects and other small weapons so easily.

ZZUTAK™

The Thing That Shouldn't Exist

F	AM(50)	Health: 404
A	PR(4)	
S	ShX(150)	Karma: 6
E	ShY(200)	
R	FB(2)	Resources: None
I	FB(2)	
P	FB(2)	Popularity: 0

POWERS:

Body armor: Zzutak's unusual nature grants him Monstrous protection from physical and Force attacks, as well as Class 1000 protection from cold, heat, fire, and corrosives.

Immortality: The Thing That Shouldn't Exist cannot be destroyed, only rendered immobile.

TALENTS: None.

HISTORY: When a tall, mysterious stranger arrived on the doorstep of comic-book artist Frank Johnson, little did he suspect he was dealing with the leader of a dangerous group of Aztec revolutionaries. The man claimed to be a fan of the monsters Johnson painted for comic books such as *Strange Tales*. To help the talented artist achieve true greatness, the stranger gave him a set of wondrous "three-dimensional" paints, intended to give his work a more lifelike quality.

The paints certainly proved to have incredible powers. Whatever Johnson depicted with the oils quickly moved away from the canvas and became real. Using the paints was not without its dangers, though, as the artist soon discovered. Viewing even the tiniest bit of enchanted paint caused Johnson to succumb to the subliminal suggestions the stranger had implanted in the weird gift.

Johnson found himself setting off for Mexico, very much against his will. He trekked for quite some time into the Sierra Madre Mountains. In a remote valley there, he came upon a perfectly preserved Aztec temple—and the stranger who had



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first given him the paints. It was only then that he learned the reason he had received the dangerous present.

The stranger, like all the residents of the valley, was a descendant of a group of Aztecs that had fled the Spanish conquistadors. The Aztecs managed to hide in the valley for centuries, maintaining their culture. In that time, they worked to perfect the three-dimensional paints. With the paints—and the help of a talented fantasy artist like Johnson—the Aztecs hoped to create an army of monsters, then sweep out of the valley and retake Mexico.

Though he tried to fight the lure of the paints, Johnson was compelled to complete the first stage of the revolutionaries' plan: a painting of Zzutak, the Thing That Shouldn't Exist. As with the other, less fantastic objects Johnson had created with the paints, Zzutak stepped away from the canvas as a living thing. A creature of great size and strength, Zzutak was at the command of the leader of the Aztecs. And as the Thing That Shouldn't Exist was put to work sealing the valley so the monster army could be created in complete secrecy, Johnson started painting another beast.

The artist knew he was the only person who could prevent the death and destruction a monster army would bring down upon Mexico. With little more than hope driving him on, Johnson began to chant softly to the creature he was painting: "Zzutak is your enemy—you must destroy him!" The desperate ploy worked. When the second monster stepped from the canvas, it immediately set upon Zzutak. Locked in combat, the evenly matched foes moved into the Aztec temple. Their brawl brought the ancient structure crashing down around them, burying them both beneath tons of stone and earth. Unable to move the rubble, caught in unending conflict with his equally powerful foe, Zzutak was trapped.

In the collapse of the temple, a stone struck the Aztec elder, wiping out his memory of the planned overthrow of Mexico. Deprived of their temple, their leader, and their monster army, the other revolutionaries wandered out of the valley, defeated. Before leaving, Johnson destroyed the remaining paints.

On returning to New York, Johnson tried to sell a mundane rendering of Zzutak to the editor of *Strange Tales*. Though he balked at the creature, which was just too fantastic to be believable, the editor allowed the artist to finish the painting. If the numbering of the comic universe's *Strange Tales* runs parallel to that in the real world, Johnson's rendition of Zzutak, the Thing That Shouldn't Exist, appeared on *Strange Tales* #88, released in 1961.



ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Zzutak is a slow-moving, awkward, and almost-mindless pawn of the person in control of the Aztec revolutionaries who first created the mystic paints. He will do as his master commands, but will fight savagely to protect himself even without someone directing him.

Many possibilities exist for working Zzutak into campaign play. A villain could revive the fanatic Aztec organization that first created the mystic paints and the monster. Rescuing the somewhat hapless beast from the ruins of the Aztec temple should prove relatively easy for any evildoer with access to money or construction equipment.

Though Johnson destroyed the paints the Aztec high priest gave him, the formula for the fantastic three-dimensional paints surely exist somewhere in the hidden valley. Without the guidance of the Aztec high priest, the paints confer the Animate Drawings power to the user at Amazing (50) intensity. The person possessing the paints can only animate objects that he can draw.

Where more monsters dwell

Looking for more inspiration? The original comics featuring the Stan Lee-scripted, Jack Kirby-rendered monster bashes cost quite a bit these days on the comic book back-issue market. However many of the reprint titles Marvel issued in the 1970s are still affordable, if you can find them. Titles like *Monsters on the Prowl*, *Creatures on the Loose*, and *Where Monsters Dwell* can often be spied in bargain bins at comic shops. Recently Marvel released a trade paperback called *Monster Masterworks*, that collects some of the best creature feature stories and sports a great Walt Simonson cover.

On the film front, any of the giant insect flicks of the 1950s— *Them!*, *Beginning of the End*, or *Tarantula*, to name a few—as well as American creature stomps like *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* or *Q*, can provide great material for monster-based adventures. The Japanese Godzilla series, especially the multi-beastie epic *Destroy All Monsters*, should serve as primary inspirations. For the best in super-hero/monster clashes, though, you can't beat any of the myriad incarnations of Ultraman. For more than two decades, this Japanese hero has been saving the Earth from just the sorts of menaces you're about to unleash upon your campaign world.

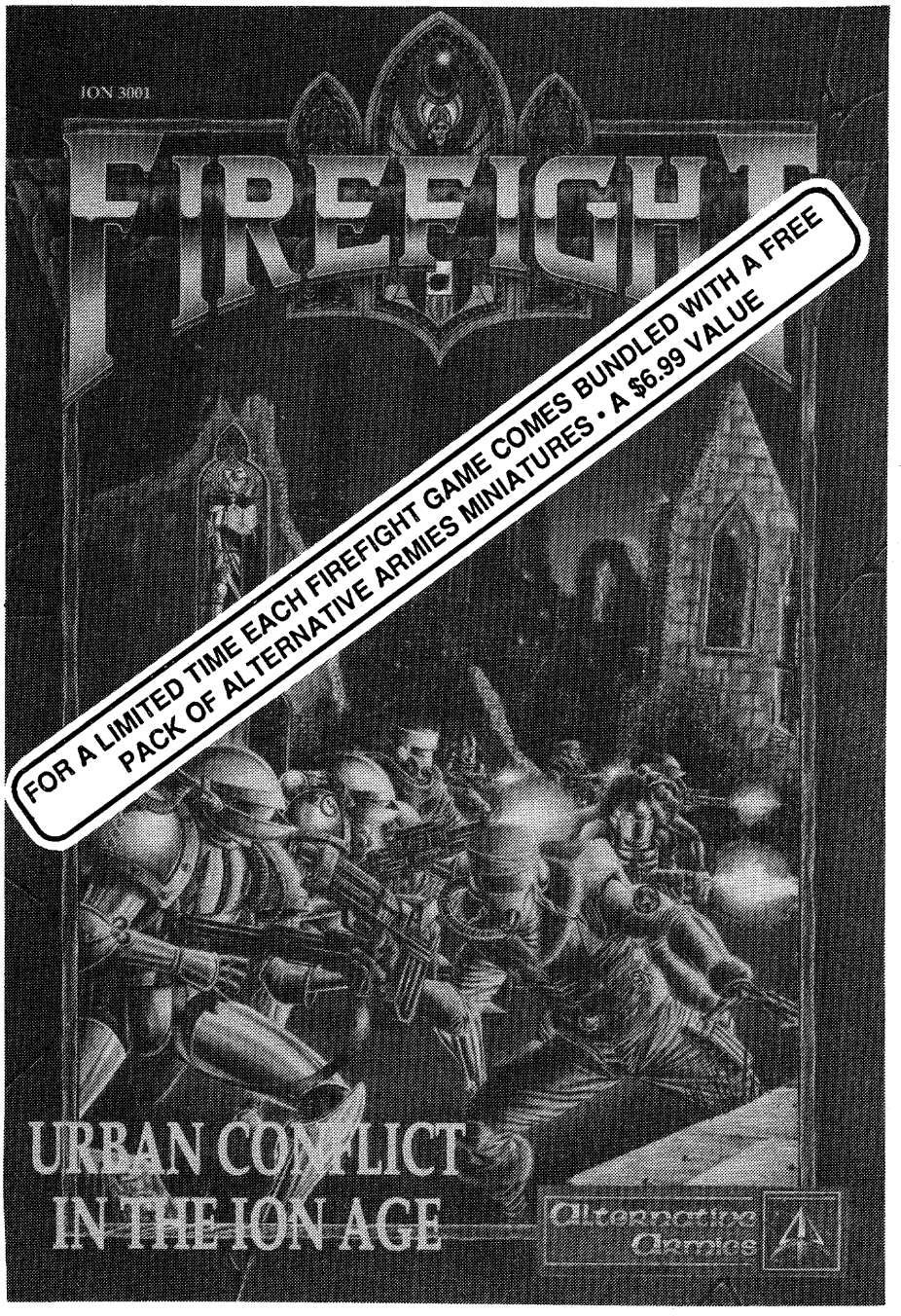
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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

❖ indicates an Australian convention.
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COSCON '92, Oct. 9-11 **PA**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Beaver Falls, Pa. Guests include Jean Rabe. Activities include many RPGA™ Network events, dealers, a gaming auction, a miniatures-painting contest, and an anniversary gift for every registrant. Registration: $20. Send an SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler PA 16003; or call Dave at: (412) 283-1159.

COUNCIL OF FIVE NATIONS 18 Oct. 9-11 **NY**

This convention will be held at the Washington Inn in Albany, N.Y. Events include RPGA™ Network events, with role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, seminars, miniatures and board games, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration varies. Write to: COUNCIL OF FIVE NATIONS 18, Schenectady Wargamers Assoc., P.O. Box 9429, Schenectady NY 12309.

NECRONOMICON '92, Oct. 9-11 **FL**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Tampa, Fla. Guests include James P. Hogan, Ray Aldridge, and Glen Cook. Activities include panels, an art show, dealers, a charity auction, a masquerade, an Ygor party, a trivia contest, and workshops. Registration: $20/weekend or $8/day. Write to: NECRONOMICON '92, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569; or call: (813) 677-6347.

QUAD CON '92, Oct. 9-11 **IA**

This convention will be held at the Palmer Auditorium in Davenport, Iowa. Events include role-playing, miniatures, and historical games, with a silent auction, a miniatures-painting competition, dealers, and on-site food. Preregistration materials will be available after Aug. 1. Registration: $9/weekend or $4/day preregistered; $12/weekend or $6/day at the door. Games will cost $2-3 each. Send a long SASE and two stamps to: QUAD CON '92, c/o Game Emporium, 3213 23rd Ave., Moline IL 61265; or call: (309) 762-5577 (no collect calls, please).

GAMEMASTER '92, Oct. 10 **ID**

This convention will be held at the Student Union Building of Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. The guest of honor is Gary Thomas. Write to: Gamemaster's Guild, 3531 Sugar Creek Dr., Meridian ID 83642; or call: (208) 888-6851.

KETTERING GAME CONVENTION VII Oct. 10-11 **OH**

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include role-playing, board, computer, miniatures, and RPGA™ Network game events, plus a game auction. Registration: $2/day. Write to: Bob Von Gruenigen, 804 Willowdale Ave., Kettering OH 45429; or call: (513) 298-3224.

NUKE-CON 2, Oct. 10-11 **NE**

This convention will be held at the American Legion South Omaha Post #331 in Omaha, Nebr. Guests include Stan West and Fredd Gorham. Activities include role-playing and miniatures tournaments, as well as open gaming. Registration: $5/day. Write to: Pat K. Wokurka, NUKE-CON, P.O. Box 1561, Bellevue NE 68005.

WHITEWATER GAMERS CONVENTION 3 Oct. 10-11 **WI**

This convention will be held at the Campus Activities Center on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Registration: $5/weekend, or $3/day. Judges are welcome. Write to: Vince Reynolds, 1380 W. Main St., Apt. #111, Whitewater WI 53190; or call: (414) 473-4206.

CIRCLE OUROBOROS '92, Oct. 16-18 **MS**

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson's in Meridian, Miss. Guests include Steven Barnes and Robert Asprin. Activities include role-playing and miniatures games, game demos, and a movie room. Registration: $20 preregistered; $25 at the door. Write to: CIRCLE OUROBOROS, P.O. Box 492, Meridian MS 39302.

ENBICON IV, Oct. 16-18 ❇

This convention will be held at the Student Union Building on the campus of the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, N.B. Guests include Margaret Weis. Activities include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, plus game auctions, dealers, seminars, and miniatures and art competitions. Registration: $12 (Canadian). Write to: ENBICON, c/o UNB Student Union, Box 4400 UNB, Fredericton NB, CANADA E3B 5A3; or call James at: (506) 459-5689.

MAINECON '92, Oct. 16-18 **ME**

This convention will be held at the Campus Center of the University of Southern Maine in Portland, Maine. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with Napoleonic, Civil War, WWII, and other war games. Registration: $10/weekend preregistered, $15/weekend at the door. Write to: Maine Wargamers' Assoc., 116 Front St., Bath ME 04530; or call: (207) 443-3711.

NEBULOUS CON IV, Oct. 16-18 **WV**

This convention will be held at McLure House hotel in Wheeling, W.Va. Events include role-playing and strategy games, panels, an art contest, an SF cantina, a costume contest, and dealers. Registration: $13/weekend preregistered; $15/weekend at the door. Single-day rates are available at the door. Send an SASE to: Nebulous Assoc., P.O. Box 6638, Wheeling WV 26003; or call: (304) 233-1486.

NOVAG VII, Oct. 16-18 **VA**

This convention will be held at the West Park Hotel in Leesburg, Va. Activities include role-playing and miniatures games, with raffles, dealers, and contests. Registration: $10 preregistered, $12 at the door or $6/day. Preregistered GMs will receive a discount. Write to: NOVAG, P.O. Box 729, Sterling VA 20667; or call: (703) 450-6738.

VALLEYCON 17, Oct. 16-18 **MN**

This convention will be held at the Regency Inn in Moorhead, Minn. Guests include Joel Rosenberg and Robert Daniels. Activities include

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SAINT'S CON '92, Oct. 17-18 **MN**

This gaming convention will be held at the Atwood Center Ballroom on the campus of St. Cloud State University in St. Cloud, Minn. Events include role-playing, miniatures, and board games. Other activities include a miniatures competition and tournaments. Registration: $2. Door prizes will be awarded. Write to: SAINT'S CON, c/o Joe Becker, 1404 12th St. SE, St. Cloud MN 56304.

TACTICON '92, Oct. 17-18 **CT**

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Stratford, Conn. Events include role-playing and miniatures games, with open gaming. Other activities include dealers, movies, and a miniatures contest. Registration: $15 preregistered; $20 at the door. Write to: TACTICON '92, c/o Jim Wiley, 100 Hoyt St., Stamford CT 06905; or call: (203) 969-2396.

WIZARDS' GATHERING III
Oct. 17-18 **RI**

This convention will be held at the Days Hotel in Providence, R.I. Events include role-playing and miniatures games, with dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, a costume contest, awards, and a raffle. Registration: $25/weekend or $15/day at the door. GMs are welcome. Write to: WIZARDS' GATHERING, c/o SMAGS, P.O. Box 6295, So. Sta., Fall River MA 02724; or call: (508) 324-4717.

WARP III, Oct. 23-25 **OK**

This convention will be held at the Trade Winds Central Inn in Tulsa, Okla. Guests include L. Neil Smith, Ron Dee, and Randy Farran. Activities include role-playing, miniatures, and board games, plus a costume contest, dealers, an art show and con suite, videos, music, parties, and open gaming. Registration: $8 preregistered; $14 at the door. Write to: WARP, 415 S. 66th E. Ave., Tulsa OK 74112.

DRACON '92, October 24 ✪

This SF&F convention will be held at the Student Union on the campus of University of Bristol in Bristol, England. Guests include David Gemmell, Diane Duane, Peter Morwood, and Rob Holdstock. Activities include panels, classic videos, gaming, and historical scenarios. Registration: £3 in advance. Write to: DRACON, 37 Cowper Rd., Bristol BS6 6NZ, ENGLAND; or call: (+44) 0272-735935.

RUDICON 8, Oct.30-Nov.1 **NY**

This convention will be held on the Rochester Institute of Technology campus in Rochester, N.Y. Events include role-playing and war games, miniatures painting and art contests, historical miniatures gaming, dealers, an auction, and a con party with a costume contest. Registration: $5/weekend preregistered. Write to: RUDICON, c/o Student Gov't., 1 Lomb Memorial Dr., Rochester NY 14623.

CON OF THE WEIRD & SUPERNATURAL
Oct.31-Nov.1 **PA**

This convention, specializing in horror and mystery games, will be held at the Embers in Carlisle, Pa. Events include dealers, videos, a miniatures-painting contest, and over 30 gaming events. Registration: $6-$10. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 3rd St., New Cumberland PA 17070; or call: (717) 774-6676.

STARCON '92, Oct. 31-Nov. 1 **WI**

This convention will be held at the Union Station in Neenah, Wis. Events include demos, tournaments, an art show, special guests, a miniatures contest, and dealers. Write to: STARCON '92, 1112 N. Lake St., Neenah WI 54956; or call: (414) 722-6448 or (414) 725-2555.

CON*STELLATION XI, Nov.6-8 **AL**

This SF convention will be held at the Huntsville Hilton in Huntsville, Ala. Guests include Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Dean Wesley Smith, Michael Flynn, Stephen Hickman, and Mike Glicksohn. Registration: $22. Send an SASE to: CON*STELLATION XI, c/o Scorpio, P.O. Box 4857, Huntsville AL 35815-4857.

NOVACON '92, Nov. 6-8 ❇

This convention will be held at the Halifax Holiday Inn in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Guests include Dave Ducan. Activities include *Star Trek* events, a medieval market, a costume contest and ball, 24-hour games and videos, an art show and auction, panels, and dealers. Registration: $25 (Canadian)/weekend. Single-day rates are available. Write to: Kendi Crawley, P.O. Box 1282 Main, Dartmouth NS, CANADA B2Y 4B9; or call: (902) 462-6796.

SHAUNCON V, Nov. 6-8 **MO**

This convention will be held at the Rodeway Inn in Kansas City, MO. Events include many first-run RPGA™ Network tournaments. Other activities include role-playing and board games, with dealers and contests. Dealers are welcome. Write to: SHAUNCON, c/o Role-playing Guild of Kansas City, P.O. Box 7457, Kansas City MO 64416; or call: (816) 455-5020.

LAGACON 15, Nov. 7-8 **PA**

This convention will, be held at the Eagles' Club in Lebanon, Pa. Events include role-playing-game and board-game tournaments, with other game events. Dealers will be present, and food will be available. GMs are welcome. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers Assoc., 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042; or call: (717) 274-8706.

ROCK-CON XX, Nov. 7-8 **IL**

This gaming convention will be held at Rockford Lutheran High School in Rockford, Ill. Guests include Darwin Bromley, James M. Ward, John Olson, and Lou Zocchi. Activities include role-playing, board, war, sports, and family games, with open gaming, demos, and tournaments. Also featured is the 1992 International EMPIRE BUILDER* tournament. Registration: $5. Write to: ROCK-CON, 14225 Hansberry Rd., Rockton IL 61072.

GAME FAIR XV, Nov. 13-15 **IL**

This convention will be held at the Illinois Central College main campus in East Peoria, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with dealers, an auction, and open gaming. Registration: $5/weekend; $3/day. Write to: GAME FAIR XV, P.O. Box 308, Groveland IL 61535; or call (evenings): (309) 387-6233.

BATTLECON '92, Nov. 14-15 **CA**

This convention will be held at the Fabulous Inn on Hotel Circle in San Diego, Calif. Events include games and tournaments based on World War II. Registration: $16/weekend preregistered; $20/weekend or $10/day at the door. Dealers are welcome. Write to: Dan Huffman,

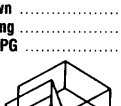
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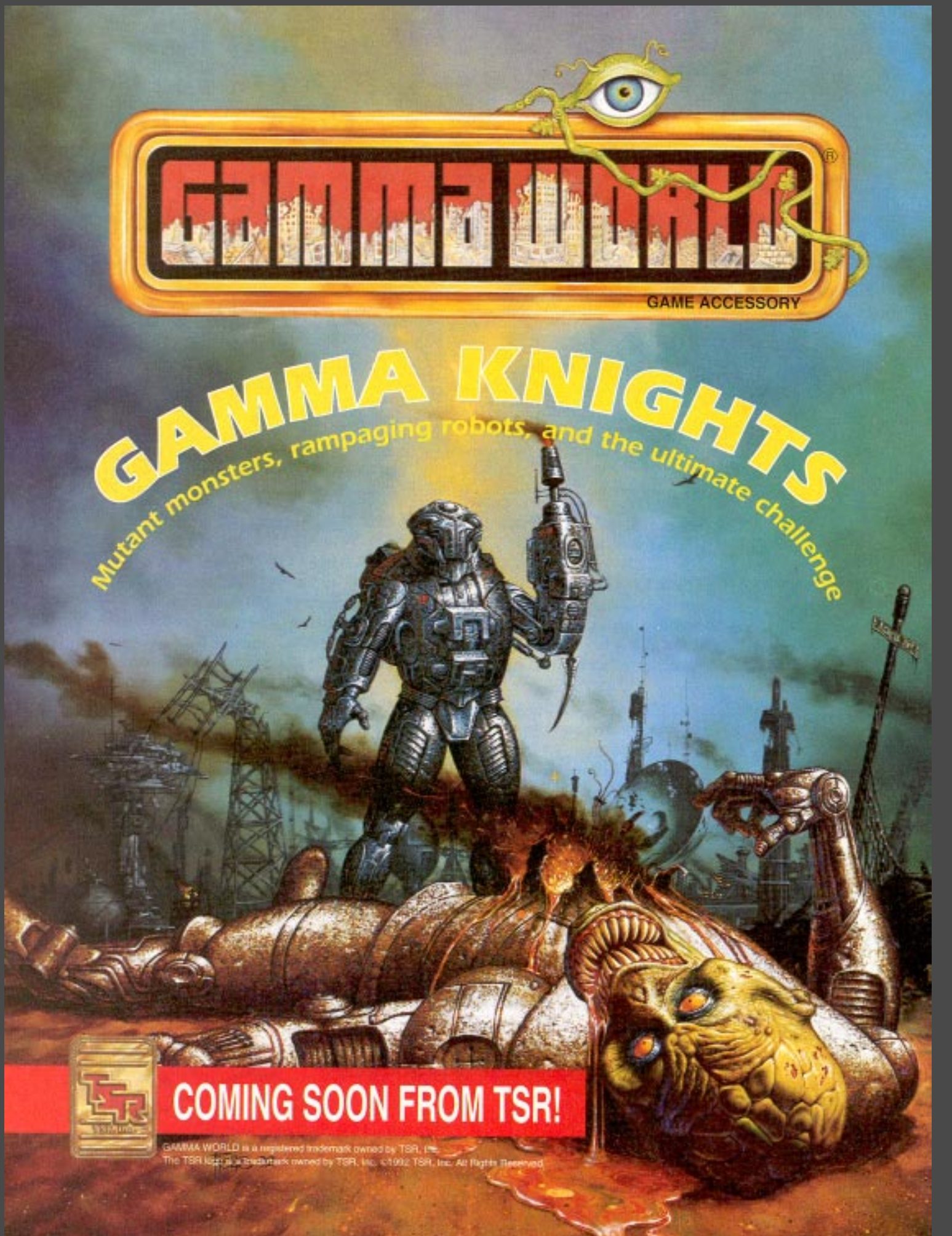
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Convention Calendar

Continued from page 79

c/o Trags Distributing, 3023 Hancock St., Suite C, San Diego CA 92110; or call: (619) 688-1156.

PENTACON VIII, Nov. 14-15 **IN**

This convention will be held at the Grand Wayne Center in Fort Wayne, Ind. Events include role-playing, computer, board, and miniatures games, with miniatures-painting and costume contests, door prizes, and a flea market. Registration: $10 preregistered. Write to: Steve & Linda Smith, 835 Himes, Huntington IN 46750; or call: (219) 356-4209.

PROVOCATION '92, Nov. 14-15 ❇

This convention will be held at the John E Kennedy school in Montreal, Quebec. Events include gaming tournaments, round-table discussions, an auction, and open gaming. Registration: $20 (Canadian)/weekend or $12/day before Nov.1. Write to: PROVOCATION, C.P. 63, succ. M. Montreal PQ, CANADA H1V 3L6; or call: (514) 596-0115.

DALLASCON '92, Nov. 20-22 **TX**

This convention will be held at the Le Baron Hotel in Dallas, Tex. Events include over 200 role-playing, board, and miniatures events, with dealers' room, movies, seminars, and an auction. Write to: DALLASCON, PO. Box 867623, Plano TX 75086.

SAGA I, Nov. 20-22 **LA**

This convention will be held at the Airport Sheraton Inn in Metairie, La. Events include gaming, a scavenger hunt, costume and miniatures contests, videos, and a dealers' room. Registration: $10 preregistered before Nov. 1; $15 at the door. Call Wargames & Fantasy: (504) 734-1953; or Richard Wilson: (504) 835-6505.

GROUND ZERO, Nov. 21-22 **MD**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn-Chesapeake House in Aberdeen, Md. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with dealers and a game auction. Registration: $12 at the door. Write to: GROUND ZERO, c/o The Strategic Castle, 114 N. Toll Gate Rd., Bel Air MD 21014; or call: (410) 638-2400.

WARPCON '92, Nov. 21-22 **MI**

This convention will be held in Sangren Hall on the campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Mich. Events include role-playing and miniatures games, with a miniatures contest and a movie room. Dealers and GMs are welcome. Registration: $5/weekend or $3/day. Write to: Western Area Role-players, Fuance 2040, Mailbox #47, W. Michigan Univ., Kalamazoo MI 49008; or call Jeff: (616) 387-9783.

COCOACON '92, Nov. 27-29 **PA**

This convention will be held at the Harrisburg Marriott in Harrisburg, Pa. Events include RPGA™ Network events, with role-playing and miniatures games, a miniatures-painting contest, a dealers' area, and open gaming. Registration: $9/weekend before Nov. 10; $13/weekend at the door. Single-day rates vary. Write to: COCOA-CON, 210 S. Grant St., Palmyra PA 17078; or call evenings: (717) 838-9502.

GOBBLECON '92, Nov. 28 **PA**

This convention will be held at the Wind Gap Fire Hall in Wind Gap, Pa. Events include role-playing and miniatures games and demos, and RPGA™ Network games, Other activities include prizes for top players and a dealers' area. Food will be available on-site. Registration: $7 before Nov. 16; $10 thereafter. Event tickets are $1 each. Send a long SASE to: GOBBLECON, c/o 118 S. Broadway, Wind Gap PA 18091; or call Mike: (215) 863-5178. No collect calls, please.

CONCOCTION '92, Dec. 4-6 **NJ**

This convention will be held at the Quality Inn in Atlantic City, N.J. Events include RPGA™ Network events, with other role-playing, board, and miniatures games; a game auction; and dealers. Registration: $17/weekend preregistered; $20/weekend at the door. Write to: CONCOCTION '92, P.O. Box 222, Oceanville NJ 08231; or call: (609) 272-1157.

GAMEFEST '92 PART III, Dec. 4-6 **IL**

This convention will be held at Friends Hobby Shop in Waukegan, Ill. Events include miniatures, role-playing, and board games. Write to: Friends Hobby, 1411 Washington, Waukegan IL 60085; or call: (708) 336-0790.

PALACON '92, Dec. 28-30 **KY**

This convention will be held at the Laser Chase in Louisville, Ky. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with prizes, vendors, and open gaming. Registration: $20. Write to: The Paladin Group, 721 N. Hite Ave. #3, Louisville KY 40206; or call: (502) 893-8953.

How effective was your convention listing? If you are a convention organizer, please write to the editors and let us know if our "Convention Calendar" served your needs. Your comments are always welcome.



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Dragon's Bestiary

Continued from page 24

dice. Thus, a swarm of 52 sparks would attack as a 5 HD creature and a 49-spark swarm would have 4 HD. Because the tymher-haid attacks from all sides simultaneously, shield and dexterity bonuses to the victim's armor class are ignored, and the tymher-haid gains a bonus of +2 to hit due to its members' small size. If the tymher-haid scores a hit, damage done by the many stings is equal to its effective hit dice. If the tymher-haid drops below 10 sparks, a successful attack does less than a point of damage, so while it will remain a distraction sufficient to disrupt spell-casting, it is no longer a threat to most life.

As each spark is nearly mindless, the tymher-haid uses only the simplest of tactics in combat. In fact, a tymher-haid will only infrequently (20% of the time) divide its attacks among multiple opponents, usually concentrating on killing one creature before it turns its attention to another. Because it doesn't care what living creature it kills, a tymher-haid will consider attacking any living creature near it including humans, riding beasts, pack animals, birds on nearby trees, or passing swarms of insects. Usually, whatever nearby creature makes itself the most noticeable, by way of large size, movement, sound, or other attention-getting activities, finds itself the next victim of an attacking swarm. Conversely, this mindlessness makes it immune to the effects of most psionics or illusions, as those effects are spread equally amongst all the constituent sparks in the crowd.

Each spark within a tymher-haid has only a single hit point, but a spark's small size and high maneuverability make it hard to hit with normal weapons. The sparks are immune to all fire-based attacks but are particularly vulnerable to water. A flask of water sprayed into a tymher-haid will kill 1d6 sparks (holy water kills twice that number), and a *create water* spell will destroy 2d10 sparks per level of the caster. In addition, spells such as *protection from* evil keep it at bay, while a *raise dead* spell kills the tymher-haid instantly. Clerics will find them relatively easy to turn (treated as skeletons), but as only 2d6 sparks are normally turned or destroyed by a cleric performing this attack, it might not serve much purpose.



Habitat/Society: No matter what race of creature they were in life, the sparks of a tymher-haid understand no language. They communicate with each other by a limited form of telepathy that serves only to transmit imperatives such as "target" and "threat identification." A mind-reading creature would detect no mind at all in one spark, and only the most rudimentary one in the tymher-haid as a whole.

A tymher-haid needs no food to sustain itself and gains no pleasure from killing creatures. In this respect, it acts more as an uncaring force of nature like the wind and rain than as an undead monster like a ghoul or wraith.

Although such an occurrence would be exceedingly rare, if two tymher-haid swarms encountered each other, they would merge into a single tymher-haid, behaving in all ways as if they had always been a single group-entity.

Ecology: A tymher-haid is a naturally (though rarely) occurring undead, originating in places of great carnage such as gutted dungeons and bloodied battlefields, but not appearing until the dead are long forgotten, sometimes not for years after their deaths. Because of the sparks' vulnerability to water, a tymher-haid does not often survive for long after its formation, being more likely to die in a normal rainstorm than at the hands of adventurers. Thus, a tymher-haid usually does not get far from its place of origin.

Because a tymher-haid is formed of such commonly available stock, more than one evil necromancer has attempted to discover a spell that will create or control one. While they have several similarities to the lowest forms of undead, the corpses animated using the *animate dead* spell on the site of a mass death (where a tymher-haid might be expected to form) would create zombies and skeletons but no swarm of deadly sparks. Even powerful necromancers find themselves unable to work with a tymher-haid, as the *control undead* spell grants control over only six sparks at a time. Only the most dedicated of necromancers would dedicate years of research to create and control a tymher-haid. Ω



Give us the word!

What do you think of this magazine? What do you like best or want to see changed most? What do you want to see next? Turn to "Letters" and see what others think, then write to us, too!

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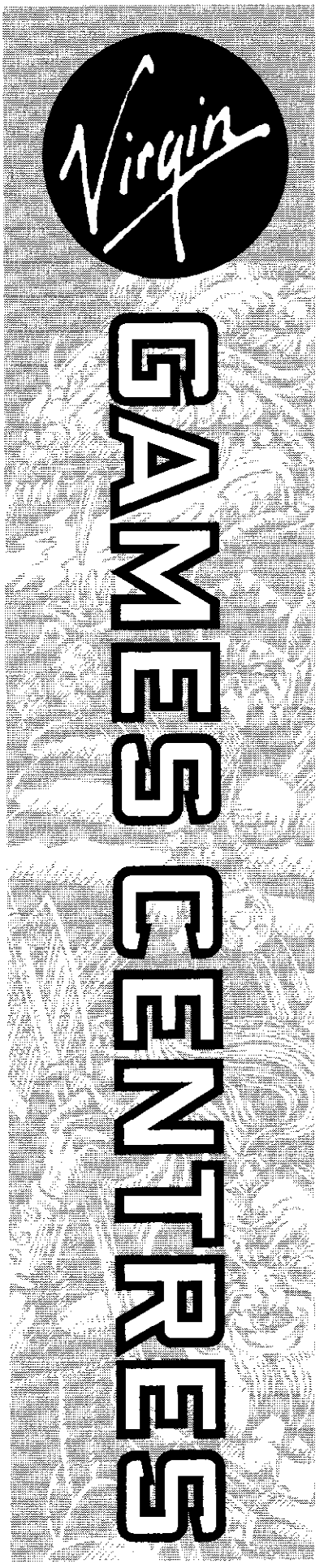
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Mission: Impossibly Dangerous!

Continued from page 18

rules just show the major areas; smaller spots can show up anywhere, with more large and small sites showing up all the time.

Many role-players would get a particular kick out of adventuring in scenarios set in their real-life hometowns or neighborhoods. In the DARK CONSPIRACY game, you can base an entire campaign there. See your hometown converted into Demonground, where you must stalk through the homes and businesses you are familiar with and root out the sources of evil. Conversely, your community could be an average struggling community in the new world order. In that case, you can fight to keep your hometown from *becoming* Demonground, as well as fighting off packs of wild animals, bandits, and corp-sponsored thugs. You could even fight to get shipments of supplies through to all the communities in the general area. The possibilities are endless.

The fighter and investigator types must be more closely balanced in this type of adventure than in any other. Espionage adventures favor investigators, while all the rest rely mainly on combat specialists. Aside from the standard types of both, the more exotic classes can come into play at times. A journalist could cover a particularly important expedition, or could do it all the time if the publication in question was a science-oriented one. Archaeology-minded members of the nomenklatura could finance expeditions, and the more jaded characters might even go along.

Drifters, homeless characters, rebellious proles, and even gangers might sign on to do the more physical work, just to get spending money. Construction workers and civil engineers could also get involved, both in the actual excavation work and in constructing shelters for the research team. The transport classes (truckers, commercial pilots, merchant marines) could take the team to the site and make regular supply runs.

An entertainer might consider a location with exotic ruins to be a great place to shoot a video or movie. Politicians with dollar signs in their eyes might want to turn the ruins into a tourist attraction (as if anyone could afford vacations any more, or dared travel). Once the attraction was official, public employees might be assigned to run it. If hired help is scarce, local authorities might have a chain gang of convicts do the digging. Any sizeable expedition will need a doctor and at least one mechanic along. Even an environmentalist might invite himself along, just to make sure that all that digging doesn't upset the local balance of nature.

Big-game hunting

Despite the title, the purpose of this adventure isn't mere sport, nor is it just another term for a search-and-destroy mission that the exploration and quick-reaction adventures specialize in. Rather, the purpose of the hunt is to either capture a specific beast and bring it back alive for study, or to kill it and use its body parts as either research materials or ingredients for something special. In short, the PCs in this adventure are the DARK CONSPIRACY game's equivalents of the suppliers of spell components in fantasy RPGs like the D&D, AD&D, and SHADOWRUN games.

Consider all the reasons for bringing back creatures or their body parts. Did alligators turn into dragons as the result of radiation, or was it a mutation caused by genetic experimentation? If the latter, then whose experiments were they, human's or Dark Minion's? Lesser vampires and moss zombies are living humans who were infected by diseases or parasites, so capturing them or taking samples of their blood and tissues could be vital in finding a cure for their conditions. Of course, there is always the "knowledge for knowledge's sake" scenario. This is particularly true when the quarry is a Dark Minion "pet" kept over from prehistoric times, such as the sabre-toothed cat.

Nearly all the character classes involved in the exploration of ruins can be used here, either during the hunt itself or as employees at the facility where the creatures finally end up. This is a great scenario for the GM to introduce new beasties. Not only will a new creature be an unknown quantity, but its existence will be the reason for the expedition in the first place. Fighting unknown monsters is always hard, and a "bring 'em back alive" expedition where the use of lethal force is prohibited makes it that much harder. If the PCs wind up killing the creature for selfish reasons like self-defense, they might find themselves unemployed (not to mention unpaid).

There is the reverse of this adventure, too, where humans are the prey, and the hunters are ETs or other Dark Minions. Aside from the simple kidnapping of lone travelers in the country or on a deserted city street, this scenario has been covered in the chapter on piracy and skyjacking.

As can be seen, there is a multitude of possible adventures in the DARK CONSPIRACY game. Whether you're shooting at giant squids with shipboard-mounted tank-breaker systems, stalking bloodkin trolls in Kentucky's Mammoth Caves, or lobbing mortar rounds on the local garage to kill the slither that's taken up residence there, you'll find plenty, of action and adventure in this science-fiction world of the near future. Ω

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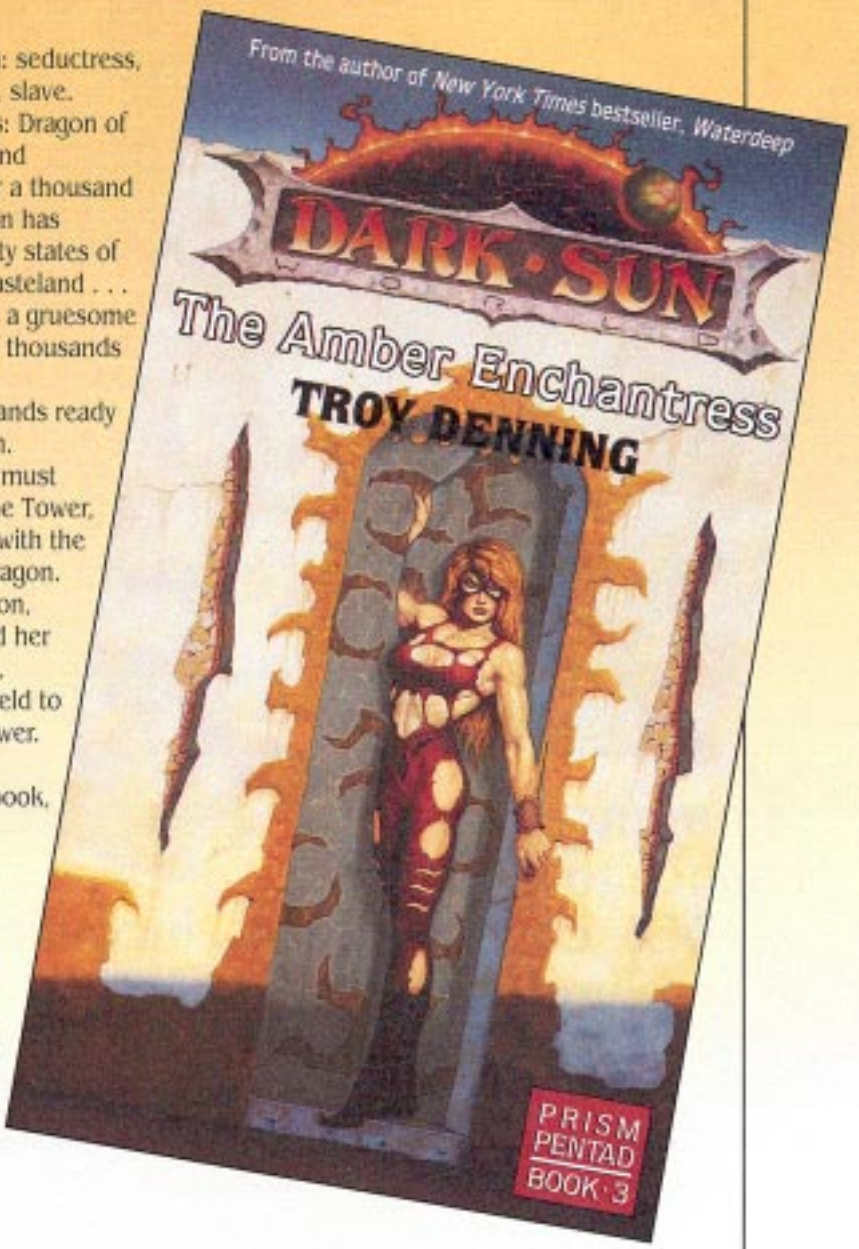
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The Game Wizards

by William W. Connors

History is filled with villains. Some are real, like Adolf Hitler or Al Capone; others are fictional, like Professor Moriarty or Sauron. Whatever their origins, there are certain things that go into making a truly good (i.e., evil) villain. This article will take a brief look at some of these elements and introduce you to some ways that you can make the villains in your games more malevolent than ever.

Bigger is better

All good villains have some aspect that makes them larger than life. To illustrate this, let's look at Darth Vader, one of the best-known villains in modern fiction,

Physically, of course, Vader is an imposing figure. He's tall and powerfully built, hides behind a frightening mask, and speaks in a rasping, synthetic voice that cannot help but be remembered. By this alone, Vader has shown himself to be a noteworthy fellow.

Of course, there's more to the Sith Lord than just his looks. He's got a special ability—his control over the Dark Side of the Force—that sets him apart from those around him. We never find out what Vader is truly capable of, but we always assume that it's pretty fearsome. That mystery also helps to maintain Vader's mystique.

Actions speak louder than words

This, of course, is an important part of characterization in general. It serves the purposes of a fiction writer as well as a game master.

In fiction, we say "show, don't tell." If the villain is upset at something, he doesn't say "Gosh, this is really making me mad." No, he pulls out his gun and blasts the nearest person or takes some other action to show his anger. As a rule, there is some trademark associated with every good villain; something that heroes can instantly identify as their nemesis' calling card. Dracula, for example, leaves the telltale bite marks on the necks of his victims. while Darth Vader seems to leave a trail of suffocated Imperial Navy officers behind him.

This trademark should be reflected in every aspect of the villain's personality. Vader, for example, has an utter disregard for those around him. He is not sadistic, merely uncaring. He has his own set of goals, and whatever course is best for accomplishing these objectives is the one that he will take. Does the beautiful princess have information that she won't give up? Okay, torture her until she talks. Has the Grand Admiral failed in his mission? So be it, dispose of him and replace him with another, more competent officer.

Let's get motivated

One of the best ways to decide the actions and personality of a villain is to understand his motivation. Nobody will become a truly great villain without some motivating factor in his background. It might be that this circumstance will make the heroes feel sorry for the bad guy. As they say, "This doesn't excuse his actions, but I think now we understand him better"

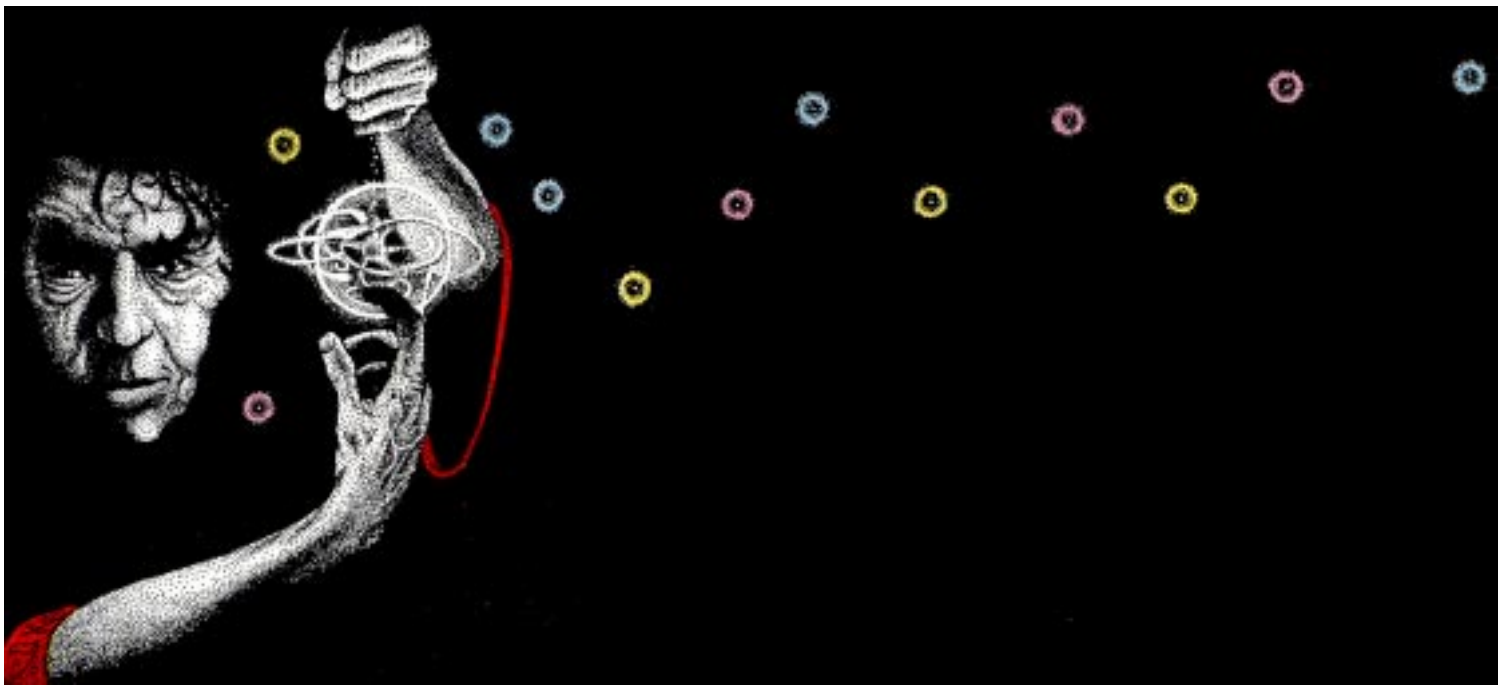
Many such villains have no such circumstance however, but that doesn't mean that every one of them is out to conquer the world, galaxy, universe, etc. That's trite, and your players have heard it one hundred times already. Vader, for example, does what he does because he serves his Emperor (and the Dark Side).

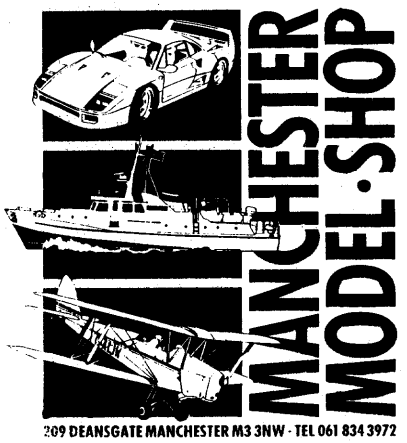
"I'll get you for this."

Many classical villains are simply out for revenge. In some cases, we might not consider these people evil, except that they do things as bad, if not worse, than the wrong that was done to them in the first place. Also, villains like this often seek revenge for an imagined wrong.

A good example of this type of villain can be found in the familiar cloak and cowl of Batman. Sure, Batman's a good guy, but let's just make a few very minor changes in the character and you'll see

Artwork by Jason R. Coleman





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how great a villain he could become. The entire reason for his nocturnal war against crime is revenge: He saw his parents killed, and he vowed to take his loss out on criminals in general.

In the "real world" of DC comics, Batman draws the line at killing. He may kick the you-know-what out of the bad guys, but he leaves them alive for the police to drag off to prison. It's not hard to imagine Batman taking things a step further and becoming a one-man justice system. If he starts snuffing the bad guys, he becomes a homicidal maniac, not a hero. In this case, he's just as bad as the criminals he hunts.

The greater good

Of course, the world isn't cast in black and white. There are always shades of gray. In many cases, a villain might not be truly responsible for his crimes or might simply be taking a dark path toward an ultimately honorable goal.

Consider the case of Ozymandius in the DC Comics' Watchmen series. In most cases, he's a good guy. He has come to recognize that the world is on the brink of nuclear annihilation and has resolved that only he, the smartest man on the planet, can save it. Taken as it is, this is an admirable goal. Of course, the fact that he plans to do so by destroying New York City makes him a villain, even if one agrees with his final goal (and who doesn't?)

Out of control

Another type of sympathetic villain is represented by someone like the Wolfman of Universal Pictures fame. Larry Talbot is a fine example of a villain who doesn't mean to be evil, it just kind of happens to him.

He's a nice guy on the surface. In fact, you just can't help but like him. The only problem is that he freaks out when the full moon comes up. As a werewolf, he is utterly unlikable. He maims, kills, and probably digs up flower gardens. However, we all know that he doesn't do this on purpose. Stopping a villain like this can be rough, because you don't really want to hurt him.

Obsession

As I've said, villains need to have a style or trademark that heroes can instantly recognize. This consideration lends itself very well to the villain who is obsessed. As soon as the heroes learn about the obsession, it becomes a trademark. Think about villains like the Riddler. Find a riddle at the scene of a crime? At whom does the finger of suspicion point?

Obsessions can take on many forms. Although the traditional obsession might well be the fellow who always commits crimes along a similar theme, there are countless varieties. Consider the mad scientist. His obsession isn't generally for anything material, it's knowledge that he's after.

Dramatic narration

A final point to keep in mind about villains is the way in which they're presented. Mood, pacing, and even the choice of words used in descriptions is vital here.

If, we're introduced to Darth Vader as he sits around a conference table vowing the destruction of the Rebel Alliance, we learn that he is evil and see him as the villain of the story. However, if our first impression of him is as a looming black figure against an almost utterly white background, he become even more menacing and dangerous. Thus, make the entrances of your villain dramatic.

Narrative technique is important as well. A good villain doesn't stand in the background, he lurks in the shadows. Even better, he might be described as looking as if he were an aspect of the very darkness that surrounds him. It takes a little longer to say, and you have to spend a bit more preparation time making notes of dialogue and descriptions, but in the end it's worth it.

Pacing is a vital consideration as well. If the villain just appears on the scene and vaults into combat, he loses a great deal of impact. Villains should be presented in a context that highlights their power and the evil that they can do.

Hitting close to home

A very good way to emphasize the role of the villain in your story is to tie him to the past actions of the heroes, and the stronger the tie, the better.

As an example, let me toss out an example from a VILLAINS &, VIGILANTES* campaign that I once ran. The heroes had defeated one of their greatest enemies, a fellow that they had fought countless times. This time however, they were able to shatter the magical crystal that was the source of his power. The thing went "Kaboom!" and the villain went "Thud!"

The heroes were proud of themselves. But I saw the seeds of a future villain. One of the fragments of the crystal struck one of the innocent bystanders. To him, it was nothing more than bit of glass. In time however, the crystal turned him into a nasty villain. When he showed up, wielding the same powers that the original fiend had, the heroes were instantly interested in finding out what was going on.

Closing arguments

In the end, you'll find that the time you spend in setting up a good villain is well spent. The more color and life you breathe into your NPCs, especially villains, the more likely the players are to respond and turn out role-playing performances the likes of which you've never seen. Ω

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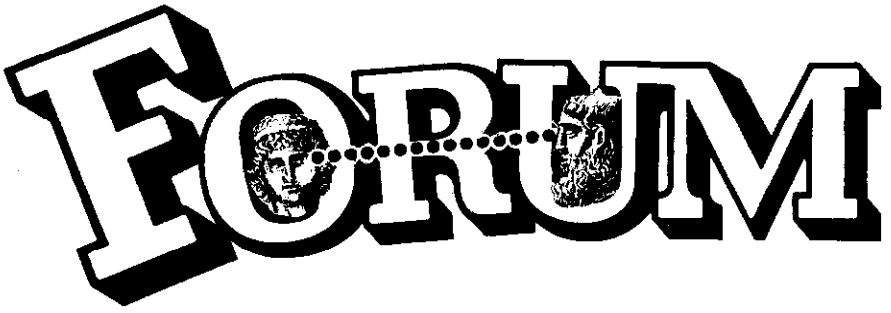
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I am writing in regard to a letter printed in DRAGON issue #173 from a 15-year-old boy who mentioned that he has never seen girls at role-playing games.

I am a 14 -year-old girl, and I'm mad about role-playing. I have been interested in it for about a year. I used to be a DM™ for an AD&D® 2nd Edition campaign for my friends (three girls and one boy) and recently started going to a role-playing club with my friend (a girl). Everyone else was male, but we still had a lot of fun. I think that one reason girls don't go to role-playing is they don't really know what it is. It's not really a subject that boys think girls are interested in, because of stereotypes such as girls like playing only with dolls.

Although I appreciate how hard it is to explain what role-playing is (I have the same problem), I think that people could at least try. If people were more open about role-playing, maybe more girls would be interested.

Caroline Bussey
Burbage, Hinckley, Leics., U.K.

The issue of sexism in gaming has again reared its ugly head. Would that it were as easy to dispatch as your average monster rearing its ugly head, but no. I've been a reader of DRAGON Magazine for more than five years and know that the issue surfaces too often.

Funny how we have no difficulty calling 18-year-olds men when they go off to fight in the Persian Gulf, yet we seem to stutter over the term "women." One of my pet peeves is the term "female gamer." In science classes, "female" may be okay for bugs and horses, but what's wrong with calling us women, or just gamers? Why qualify it at all? To do so implies that a different set of rules and attitudes applies. Does it?

That brings up some major bones of contention. Why did the creators of the AD&D 2nd Edition books use the masculine pronoun "he" throughout them? Yes, I read the explanation. At first it even made sense, as I dislike the "he/she" mish-mash as much as the next lover of the English language. Yet I have seen other books that handle the sticky pronoun problem with deft aplomb. Didn't it ever occur to anyone that "he" could be alternated with "she?"

What about miniatures? Maybe we run a PG-rated sort of dungeon, but nobody I ever gamed with actually used a figure of a scantily clad fighter as a player character. Sure, you may get one in a box of figures, and you might even opt to paint it. But use it? No, because you'd have to be Zippy the Pinhead to dress that way in a dangerous situation.

Don't whine, "This is only fantasy!" Whose fantasy? Yours, perhaps, but certainly not mine. Why is it that for the longest time, D&D® game players were willing to suspend belief in the real world enough to allow monsters, magic, and melee, but not equal strength scores for women fighters? Did I miss something here?

Don't get me wrong. I love the game. But don't you think women might have caught on to the fact that FRPGs are marketed to an audience primarily of young men? It isn't that TSR hasn't tried. Remember the HEARTQUEST books, the series of "find your fate" novels targeted at young women gamers? I know enough about marketing to understand that you cater to your audience, and if young men are your major customers, you give them what they want.

The problem is that with young women you have missed your target, and the HEARTQUEST series failed because it reduced young women to the old "girl falls in love and lives happily after" scenario. The young women I have gamed with want more out of life than that—not that falling in love isn't desirable, but they're wise enough to know that it isn't everything. Even the name "Heartquest" drips with gooey condescension. No wonder it flopped!

If you want to attract young women gamers to your product, try treating us with the dignity and respect we deserve. Start with your books. If you want to know how it can be done successfully (and it has been) try novels like Jane Yolen's *Pit Dragons Trilogy*, anything by Ursula LeGuin, Meredith Pierce's *Darkangel* series, and the *Song of the Lioness Quartet* by Tamora Pierce. Give our fictional counterparts some backbone, TSR. These books have.

Who am I to be throwing stones? Well, I'm a young adult librarian who has been successfully running a fantasy club in various libraries in the northeast for almost 10 years. To write this letter I drew on comments made to me by gamers over that time span. In their varied ways, over 100 young people have contributed to the writing of this letter. To all those gamers (they know who they are), thanks. I hope I said it well. It needed to be said.

Donna Beales
Children's Services
Pelham Public Library
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This is a reply to the 15-year-old player who was wondering why girls don't play the D&D game (in issue #173).

One day I was perusing the shelves at my local game shop when a young man of about 15 began to stare oddly at me. Finally he got up his courage and asked, "Are you here with your son?"

I laughed. "No," I said. "My sons do play the D&D game, but I'm here for my own stuff."

He looked at me with wide eyes. "You mean someone as old as you—sorry, I mean an old lady—plays the D&D game? I mean—sorry—a girl?"

Yes, yes, me—a girl! I probably have been playing the D&D game longer than this young man has lived (although I don't think I'm *old*, by any means). I think a great truth needs to be told here: There are a lot of female players out there, and not just young ones.

Since girls mature faster than boys (some young male gamers are not exactly noted for their social skills), young girls find it hard to watch their male counterparts argue over petty gaming points for hours and call it a good time. They also have a hard time with the idea that slashing, burning, looting, then hauling out make-believe treasure is a game worth expending any energy on in the first place. They are looking for a real knight in shining armor, not just a lead figure.

The time when women become D&D players is when they realize that it is a game where you can be truly liberated and still dress like a bimbo—if only in your imagination.

Elysa Moulding
Salt Lake City UT

I'm writing in response to "Irate Female's" letter in issue #177. Maybe it's where you live, Irate, or maybe you're being too sensitive. I am a female DM. My present group is evenly divided between the sexes. Of the last three groups I've gamed with, two were all-female (we didn't plan it that way, it just happened) and the other was mostly male with two females.

I've only seen one other female in my local gaming shop (she worked there briefly), but I've never been looked at with anything approaching "horror." The guys in the shop seem friendly and helpful, and maybe just a bit shy—females in the store *do* seem to be a novelty. The most-negative thing that ever happened from my visiting the store occurred when I'd given a DM my phone number because I wanted to play a game, and he called and asked me out to a movie. My husband wasn't thrilled, but it was flattering.

Perhaps Irate is thin-skinned and is reading something in people's expressions that isn't there, or maybe England is different. "Horror and amazement" seem extreme to me. I have received a letter from a gamer in Spain who was surprised to hear of a female DM. He was intrigued but hardly horrified.

Well, sisters, if you feel the same as Irate does, I suggest you recruit more female players. Drag your best friends to the next game, or convince the male players to bring their wives.

As to your complaint about not seeing enough articles referring to the player as a "her," I don't see any problem with this. In my own writings, unless I'm specifically writing about women, I also use "he." It's just less cumbersome that constantly typing "him/her," "(s)he," and other such nonsense, which is too much trouble for too little benefit. I figure the reader has enough wit to know that when a writer says "he," the writer means "he or she." (However, writing "she" generally excludes males.) For more on this issue, see page 8 of the AD&D 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*. I've also found that the majority of articles in DRAGON Magazine rotate between the sexes when giving examples. This

is enough for me. I don't feel the least bit excluded.

Nor do I have a problem with the name of *Gamesman Magazine*. I probably wouldn't even buy a magazine called "Gamesperson," as it sounds too self-conscious to be worth reading. I can figure out that "man" means "human," not "male," without having it shoved down my throat. (And "swordspeople" ruins the flavor, so I hope I don't see that in DRAGON Magazine any time soon.) Frankly, if you want to talk about being sexist, why don't I ever see magazines like "Gentleman's Home Journal," "Men's World," or "Young Mister" on the newsstands? Why do publishers assume that men don't care about child-rearing, their homes, or attracting the opposite sex? *Gamesman* is hardly an insult next to that.

Halina Adamski
Olivebridge NY

I would like to give my response to the Irate Female from England in issue #177. In my experience, yes, female gamers are rare, and that's a shame.

I have been gaming for 13 years, and I have played with only six females. I have been with eight groups (DMing for five of them), and there was no more than one female in any of the groups. Currently, I know of only one female playing—I DM for her. Three of the females I knew in gaming just stopped playing while we were in the middle of campaigns!

I find it very discouraging when I try to involve new women into the game and they say things like, "Oh, I dated a guy once who played that game." and that's as interested as they get. You should consider yourself and your group members highly successful (and lucky) in breaking away from the pack and going where few women have gone before.

I congratulate you and only wish there were more like yourself here in my gaming area!

Mathew W. Hurd
1521 Oneida St.
Utica NY 13501

I have two subjects that I'd like to offer my comments on, beginning with the English "Irate Female" from issue #177.

I've been a role-player since my teens (I'm now 28) and a DM for five years, and I have to agree that there is a definite bias against women gamers. I get the same patronizing comments from a lot of (although, in fairness, not most) male gamers when I meet them for the first time.

But what really drives me into a rage is modern fantasy art! I'm sorry to say that TSR has, upon occasion, added to this deadly sin. Please guys, retire the studded-leather jumpsuits and the chain-mail bikinis—those are *really* rough on the nipples. They are absolutely ludicrous. Alias's armor, on the cover of *Azure Bonds*, would be utterly useless in a real fight. Her arms are bare, and her "shirt," such as it is, leaves a large section of her chest exposed to a skillful sword thrust. The leather pants aren't much better.

I love the "find your fate" gamebooks, but I've almost never seen one that features a female protagonist. The player is automatically assumed to be male. The only exception is the HEARTQUEST series, available through the Mail Order Hobby Shop, which is little more than a set of romance novels. The *Indiana Jones* gamebooks are even worse for chauvinism.

The FORGOTTEN REALMS® and DRAGONLANCE® novels, though, are wonderful. Almost all feature strong women characters and societies without sexual bias. I want to thank all those authors for their creativity and consideration. Each character automatically has merit without regard for gender, which is very refreshing.

I'll now move onto my next topic: those "pesky" younger gamers. My roommate's two children—a boy, 15, and a girl, seven—spend summers and school breaks with us, and both are rabid gamers. Ryan began gaming with us at 10, and Kim joined in with us this year, after being parked in front of the Nintendo for far too long while we played. Kim's first question each summer was always, "When will I be big enough to play the D&D game?" I told her she could play as soon as she could read. Last June she proudly displayed her skill with a monologue from the Little House on the Prairie books, and I capitulated.

I even created a special adventure for her first session. Each PC was a runaway or an orphan, forced out into the cruel world. Kim played the pesky (there's that word again) kid sister of another PC, a budding mage. Her "weapon of choice" was her security blanket. Don't laugh! She filled it with rocks—her own idea—rolled a critical hit, and bashed an orc over the head.

At the tender age of seven, Kim is already an able gamer. She picked up the combat system a lot faster than the rest of us did when we started, and she instinctively knows just when to "lighten up" a serious moment by casting cantrips on her companions: backsides are "tweaked," hair grows out of noses, just-captured goblins are suddenly untied again, etc.

Please take young gamers seriously. These young people are the future of role-playing, and they are a great example to skeptical parents of how positive an influence it can be. Ryan once hated books and avoided libraries like the plague. Now he enjoys fantasy novels and sneaks into the school library for reference books on medieval society. Gaming was my steppingstone to Renaissance festivals and the Society for Creative Anachronism. And don't forget the women again—female gamers see first-hand that women, especially in the Realms, aren't wimps.

Helaina Martin
Austin TX

I'm writing in response to "Letters" in issue #179, where you give much approved support to female role-players. Three years ago, I was introduced to the AD&D game by a group of 10-year veteran players. After six months of playing a female cleric, I took over as the group's DM. Two and one-half years later, I am still heading up campaigns and all my players love the games. Did I forget to mention I am 100% female and no one believes me any less capable than any male player?

Thanks for your support of female players and DMs. You'd be surprised at how they can role-play and give fresh, new perspectives. So, guys, if you want the same old boring campaigns, don't invite any women.

Colleen Fireely
Nova Scotia

I'm an experienced game master, having run the AD&D game for about seven years now. I have played many other role-playing games. I faithfully read DRAGON magazine, and I'm an RPGA™ Network member, too. Yet, apparently, I'm an immature gamer, unfit to run events at a convention or even play in certain games where there is a stress on role-playing. My problem: I'm 15 years old.

I had never encountered the grim spectre of discrimination until I started going to some local conventions. At the first couple I went to, I had a fine time playing and even won some awards. Then I was asked to DM at another convention. I gratefully accepted.

However, I was then told that because I was so young I would have to have a friend "help me out." I still agreed. Finally I was told no, they didn't need me. I heard later that the writer of the module objected to "those *&#$%@* kids" running his module. This was an isolated incident, and many of the convention organizers didn't agree with the author. Still, I was quite angry.

The second incident of obvious discrimination was when I was looking through a booklet describing the events at UBCon, another local convention, when I noticed a odd label on some of the events: mature gamers only. thought, okay, I'm mature.

Looking through the rest of the booklet, I noticed that several events had this label on them, especially horror games or those marked "stress on role-playing." Once I got to the end of the booklet I realized that "mature" meant that no one under 18 could play. I was shocked by the idea that a convention might have an official policy of discrimination

I think I understand the reasons this discrimination started. Apparently, the two reasons are that people under 18 can't handle difficult role-playing, and that people under 18 are too immature to handle graphic violence. I disagree. I know many people my age who are excellent role-players. Compared to what you see in movies like *Friday the 13th*, horror games are pretty tame. According to one study, I've seen 2,000 murders and 20,000 sexual innuendoes on TV, so what's the problem with horror games?

Maybe I'm overreacting to a couple of isolated events. But do other conventions have this rule? Do other conventions prohibit younger people from running events? I'd like to hear from the convention organizers on this, and if so, hear them explain why these barriers were put into place. I think that that they are extremely unfair.

Frederic Bush
Rochester NY

I am writing in response to Justin Kelly's letter in issue #179. I do agree with his view on the AD&D 2nd Edition game and its effects on the mage class; I speak only from my own gaming experience. In my group, however, the changes had a wholly different effect.

The changes in the rules made me play a very nontraditional mage. Her name was Dame Michelle Mustard (I will call her the Dame for short). I think that the majority of the players in my group will agree that the Dame was one of (if not the most) powerful characters in the party, a far cry from the baggage she could have been. We started out at 3rd level and clawed our way up to the low teens.

On the field of combat, the Dame would give "suggestions" to other characters and, most importantly, would augment the others' powers. As a good example, in one adventure we found ourselves on a plane of the Abyss. We had to fight a very powerful fiend who was for the most part immune to any magicks the Dame could summon. The other characters weren't so ineffective, however, so she cast enlarge and *strength* spells on the fighters, and used *enchanted weapon* to give them that extra edge. She asked the group clerics to share the bless and *aid* spells as well. I don't think that anyone went into that battle with less than six spells on them. That battle was so simple that the only reason the DM gave us full XPs was because of our ingenuity.

That was not the only time. Whenever there was a big battle that we had time to prepare for, the Dame was there to cast the spells. Without everyone's cooperation, none of them would have made it that far.

Alas, that party did end up losing its last battle — to another mage. The Dame was the last to fall.

I think that the key to the AD&D 2nd Edition game's mage class is fast, clear, accurate thought on the player's part. The mage is not the walking neutron bomb that it once was.

The Dame was not without her faults, and we had plenty of battles that we had no time to prepare for. I think another must for AD&D 2nd Edition game mage is the player's knowledge edge of the spells. In our gaming group, we had a tip for spell-casters. Whenever we sat down to play, we'd look at the lists of spells in our books and would each pick one that we weren't 100% familiar with. Then we'd look it up and read it until we were sure we knew it. When the Dame found a scroll she could use, I would ask, "What does it do?" —not "How many dice does it do?"

A good example of this preparation in play was Uta and Middian, two mages in a game that I ran for some time. They were about the same level, and neither should have been more powerful than the other, but this was far from the truth. Uta was not from the same school of thought as the Dame. Uta shot first, then looked to see if there were any party members in melee range, but this mage saved the party several times and was wanted in the group.

Middian went unnoticed— literally. I really don't remember a time that he had an effect on a battle, other than the time he let off a *lightning bolt* in a room that was 5' wide by 12' long, and packed with PC's. Why? Because he didn't know the spells effects. He didn't understand his spells well enough; he read them, but only once. Middian cast a lot of spells, but only ones like *stoneskin* (on himself in melee) or the aforementioned *lightening bolt* at something immune to that attack. Think about it: Would your fellow adventures be very jolly if they knew that all you knew about the *fireball* spell was that it made a really big explosion?

Overall, I guess my point is the AD&D 2nd Edition game's mage is weaker if you want to go head-to-head with monsters, but if that doesn't work, be ready to kick 'em where it counts. To do this, you should know where it counts.

Steve Giblin
Boone CO

I am a DRAGON Magazine subscriber, and one of my favorite columns has always been "Sage Advice"—that is, until I read the offering in issue #181. Mr. Williams, in the guise of answering a reader's question on why there are no TSR products for evil characters, used the opportunity instead to high-handedly denounce all players who choose to play evil characters as fools who just don't know how to play the game "right." The simplistic view of evil expressed in the column was based on half-truths, untruths, and wishful thinking reminiscent of Neville Chamberlain's view of Europe in the 1930s.

The first reason given for not playing evil characters is that they are incapable of working together on a long-term basis and must eventually turn on one another. To justify this, the article states that only good and neutral characters can share common moral or ethical precepts and that evil characters are merely selfish and concerned only with staying alive. It also insinuates that only good guys can have friends and share trust, and that evil groups can only stay together through intimidation.

If this were the case, groups such as the KKK, organized crime families, etc., would not have survived for so long. The individuals involved in these groups share common precepts, but they have moral beliefs different from those of most of society. Still, they are capable of having friends and loved ones, and they remain as loyal to their respective groups as others would to more acceptable organizations.

The next reasons given are that good guys are more interesting than bad guys, and that evil characters don't develop long-term goals, so they have less to think about and less to do.

What this is based on, I have no idea. In the real world, people are far more intrigued by the evil side of life than the good. People stand and gawk when a fight breaks out or there's an accident or fire. The television and movies are filled with violence, and how many good guys are as well known as Adolf Hitler or Charles Manson? Also, the goals you set for your character—evil, good or neutralare limited only by your own imagination.

The trouble with playing evil characters is that inexperienced or poor players don't understand that the game they are playing in is for the enjoyment of all involved. When they steal from or slaughter off other PCs by playing a character who is totally and unrealistically evil, they ruin the fun for their fellow gamers. In life there is no black and white—people are complex creatures. Most of us are not as good as we should be, but none of us is completely evil.

The real reason for the answers given in the article are clearly shown by the recent decisions made by the present TSR ownership. When creating the AD&D 2nd Edition game, decisions such as the deletion of the assassin class, the exclusion of devils and demons and subsequent name changes, etc., show that despite the printing of letters in DRAGON Magazine by gamers who wish to stand up to the public condemnation of the game by the ignorant, TSR is concerned only with the bottom line and cares little for the integrity of the game.

Michael Thomas
Lee MA

I have just finished reading the response in "Sage Advice" in issue #181 to the question regarding evil PCs. While I agree with much of its content and believe that TSR should continue its concentration on predominantly good parties, I think Mr. Williams presents a much too polarized view of evil.

To my mind, there is a great deal of scope for explanations as to why an evil group might stick together. The villains might all be members of a lawful religion given specific instructions not to fight among themselves with the threat of divine retribution to back it up. In the same vein, they could all be members of a disciplined army or secret task force. This would entail a rigid hierarchy of command that could work in a role-playing situation provided the player controlling the leader is strict but not cruel.

On a less restrictive level, the members of the party might be friends. But they're evil, I hear you cry! So what? I believe that to suggest that a group of essentially selfish people could never form friendships or bonds linked by honor or debt is naive in the extreme. Like company is often welcomed, even by those deemed evil by more discerning types, and the respect of those with similar views may grow into something more substantial than acquaintance.

Also, imagine a nation of any racial type with a distinctive culture. Due to peculiar circumstances (for example, isolation or isolationist policies by their rulers), the people of this country may be charming, witty, thoughtful, and kind with their countrymen. However, once exposed to foreigners, they become filled with hatred and seek to dominate or exterminate all those they see as alien to themselves. No prizes for guessing where the inspiration for that idea came from; while Douglas Adams' natives of the planet Krikitt are deliberately over-the-top in this respect, a more moderate example of the same mentality could be easily workable. Perhaps they see themselves as somehow superior to all other nations, and believe that in the natural order of things, foreigners would become slaves to the motherland. Inside the party there could be complete harmony, as in effect this is essentially a good party working toward evil ends. Remember, evil is defined as such by others, and it is not always fixed and one-dimensional.

As a sort of additional comment on alignment in the AD&,D game, I believe that the present interpretation of the system is too rigid. It seems to me that the alignment of the character when created is what determines his behavior. With a well role-played PC, I believe the reverse should be true: A player should decide on the personality of his character, then try to fit an alignment to it. If none fit exactly, it is not the fault of the player but of the system.

Chris Roberts
5 Victoria Road
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GREAT BRITAIN GL7 1EN

The sage's answer to the second question (why doesn't TSR have products for evil characters) in issue #181 was kinder than it needed to be. The person who wrote in was "disgusted" with the emphasis on good PCs, as well as the "melodramatic theme." The sage replied by describing how good parties are more cooperative and interesting. It was kind of him, but the answer could have been a lot shorter. TSR does not create products for evil PCs because that is not the kind of image TSR wants.

Roger Moore and Barbara Young have explained numerous times in their magazines exactly why there is an emphasis on good-aligned PCs. The issue scarcely needs to be brought up again, but as the question was posed in such a virulent tone, it demands an answer.

The writer seems to have an odd view of the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting. The demiplane is evil, the domain rulers are evil, and the land is evil. Why would anyone want to run an evil PC in such a place, when the land itself is on your side? There's little challenge in it. Being a good PC in a RAVENLOFT campaign is a far greater challenge.

The WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting is a similar case. With the release of *GREYHAWK® Wars*, the forces of evil have won tremendous victories, and the forces of good are in danger of extinction. Again, what is the challenge of having an evil PC here, when the balance of power is in your favor?

I've always found that the best campaign is a party of good PCs vs. hordes of evil. The forces of good are usually outnumbered, and the PCs are a small but elite group. Facing them are the vast forces of evil: humanoids, fiends, and the occasional NPC character. It is far more challenging, interesting, and fun to be a good-aligned underdog than an evil PC.

David Howery
Logan UT
Ω


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Role-playing Reviews II

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Horrors! The latest from the dark realms

Is this the golden age of horror role-playing? It seems like only yesterday that horror games were as scarce as garlic salesmen at a vampire convention. In the early 1980s, we had the CALL OF CTHULHU* game from Chaosium, Tri-Tac Inc.'s STALKING THE NIGHT FANTASTIC* game, and not much else. Now, perhaps as a reaction to the scary times we're living in, the hobby has experienced a renaissance in horror, resulting in products for fright fans of every temperament. Now there's Gothic horror (TSR's RAVENLOFT® game), contemporary horror (Palladium Books' BEYOND THE SUPERNATURAL* game), future horror (the DARK CONSPIRACY* game from GDW), new twists on traditional themes (White Wolfs VAMPIRE THE MASQUERADE* game), and updates of old classics (such as Mayfair's revamped CHILL* game, originally from Pacesetter Ltd.). If you haven't found a game or a supplement that gives you gooseflesh, it's not for lack of product. Here's a sampling of some of the best.

CALL OF CTHULHU* fifth edition game *****

240-page softcover book
Chaosium Inc. $22
Design: Sandy Petersen and Lynn Willis
Additional material: Keith Herber, Mark Morrison, William A. Workman, Kevin A. Ross, Scott David Aniolowski, Les Brooks, William G. Dunn, and William Hamblin
Editing: Lynn Willis
Cover: Lee Gibbons
Illustrations: Earl Geier, Dreyfus, John T. Snyder, Lori Deitrick, Gene Day, Tom Sullivan, and Lisa A. Free
Graphic design: Les Brooks

GURPS HORROR* second edition game ***

128-page softcover book
Steve Jackson Games $17
Design: J. M. Caparula and Scott D. Haring
Additional material: William A. Barton, Mike Baumann, Loyd Blankenship, Bill Bodden, J. David George, Andrew Hooper, Michael Hurst, Steve Jackson, David Ladyman, Sarah Link, Steffan O'Sullivan, and Lynda Manning-Schwartz
Editing: Loyd Blankenship and Steve Jackson
Cover: Michael Whelan
Illustrations: Butch Burcham, C. Bradford Gorby, Denis Loubet, David Martin, Stephan Peregrine, Rob Prior, Kim Strombo, and John D. Waltrip

What's *really* scary is the frequency at which some publishers recycle their old products. While some revisions are genuine improvements over the previous versions, many have more to do with boosting the bottom line than pushing the envelope of game design. Me, I'm usually about as happy to see a new edition of an old role-playing game (RPG) as a cockroach in my lunch bag, which is why I was skeptical about the new CALL OF CTHULHU (CoC) and GURPS HORROR volumes. This is, after all, the fifth(!) time around for CoC, and the original GURPS HORROR book was pretty good to begin with.

But, surprise—the new editions shine. Both benefit from fresh material, judicious editing, and thorough polishes. The results warrant consideration from even the most cynical consumers.

Once-over: By all rights, the CoC game should have flopped after its debut in 1981. The game violated virtually every accepted principle of game design. Instead of tapping into the power fantasies that fueled most other RPGs, the CoC game's player characters (PCs) were nondescript nobodies, more adept with library cards than magic wands. Characters had the life spans of gnats, and the more they learned, the quicker they died. The game took place in the 1920s, not exactly the most evocative period for fantasy adventures. And though many players had heard of the H. P. Lovecraft stories on which the game was based, few could claim to be intimately familiar with them. Lovecraft's dense, works were more likely to be found in a college classroom than on a gamer's book shelf.

Yet not only did the CoC game survive, it flourished, spawning a stack of first-rate supplements and numerous foreign editions. In the process, it won nearly every award the industry had to offer. Today, the CoC game is recognized as a milestone of role-playing and one of the hobby's rare masterpieces. The CoC game has been hailed in these pages before, most recently by Jim Bambra in DRAGON® issue #158, but for the benefit of newcomers, let's take a quick look at the basics.

Conceptually, the game explores mankind's desperate—and ultimately futile—struggle against the nightmarish horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos, whose minions are to humans as cobras are to mice. Players assume the roles of professors, journalists, and similarly ordinary types, who may be a bit smarter than average but are otherwise unexceptional. Armed with revelatory tomes such as the gruesome *Necronomicon* and maybe a handgun or two, they piece together information about some horrible conspiracy or impending disaster, then attempt to take action before it's too late. Unfortunately, it's almost always too late.

The skill-based game system uses a simple percentile rating for talents appropriate to the various professions; an author might be skilled in History and Library Use, while a parapsychologist might excel in Anthropology and the Occult. A 1d100 roll less than or equal to the PC's rating generally results in the successful use of the corresponding skill. The game presents equally elegant rules for magic and combat, though neither system receives as much emphasis as they do in most supernatural and fantasy RPGs.

At the center of the CoC game is the concept of Sanity, perhaps role-playing's most innovative feature since the invention of the four-sided die. Sanity ratings simulate the mental stability of the PCs, which is always at risk considering the mind-binding terrors associated with the Mythos. When a PC lays eyes on a Mythos minion or reads an unusually disturbing passage from the *Necronomicon* or other Mythos book, he rolls percentile dice and compares the result to his current Sanity rating. If the roll exceeds his rating, he loses a few Sanity points and might acquire a debilitating mental disorder, such as schizophrenia or multiple personalities. If he loses enough Sanity, he becomes permanently insane, effectively removing him from the game. The Sanity rules put the PCs in an interesting bind: It's hard to learn about the Mythos creatures without reading the books, and harder still to confront them with your eyes closed.

Despite its sophisticated approach and unusual concepts, the CoC game is remarkably easy to learn. The rules fill fewer than 50 pages, which passes for brevity in this hobby, and they haven't changed all that much in the decade or so since the game's inception. The designers have demonstrated admirable restraint over the years, resisting the temptation to add advanced rules and concentrating instead on richly textured adventures *(Masks of Nyarlathotep*, *Horror on the Orient Express)* and fascinating sourcebooks *(H. P Lovecraft's Dreamlands*, *Terror Australis).* Few RPGs exceed the CoC game's scope or match its skillful integration of background and game systems. And there's no game more fun.

The GURPS HORROR book doesn't soar to the heights of the CoC game, but it succeeds on its own modest terms as a good, if somewhat superficial, overview of the genre in its various incarnations. Though technically a supplement to the GURPS RPG, its approach is generic enough that the ideas can be incorporated into other horror games without much effort. New rules are kept to a minimum, mostly involving additional character templates (Aristocrat, Mystic, Photographer) and an increased emphasis on Fright checks. A concept from the basic GURPS rules, the Fright check roughly resembles the CoC game's Sanity roll, in that failure to make a Fright check in a tense situation forces the character to run screaming into the night or suffer Cthulhu-esque mental disorders.

The book offers insightful tips for staging horror campaigns, an overview of evil NPCs ranging from mad scientists to psycho-killers, and a surprisingly comprehensive catalog of foes, including Hollywood Horrors (Alien Invaders, Walking Dead) and Things Man Was Not Meant to Know (Cosmic Deities, Ancient Ones with a Lovecraftian flavor). The chapters devoted to specific campaign settings—Victorian England, the Roaring '20s, and modern day—contain the most interesting material. Each setting offers cultural backgrounds, equipment lists, and job tables, along with a potpourri of colorful details, such as the frequency of mail delivery in 19th century London (as often as 12 times per day) and the drawbacks of swilling Prohibition-era bootleg gin (you might go blind—or worse). While a referee probably won't be able to build a campaign from this information alone—meaningful campaign hooks, for instance, are hard to come by—there's enough to get him off to a good start. (For more about the GURPS HORROR game, see the review of the first-edition rules in DRAGON issue #138.)

Role-playing games' ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor, but may be useful
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	The best

What's new: The most significant changes in the new CoC game involve toughening up the PCs. A fifth-edition Investigator now gets a number of skill points equal to 20 times his Education score; the previous edition gave him 15 times that number. As a bonus, an Investigator also receives 10 times his Intelligence score to spend on skills, representing his hobbies and other personal interests. Skills improve faster in the revised game; the number of points awarded for successful skill use jumps from 1d6 in the fourth edition to 1d10 in the fifth edition. Characters regain lost Sanity more efficiently, requiring a mere month of therapy in the fifth edition where the fourth edition specified 1d6 months. Fourth-edition PCs lost 1d8 points of damage per round of drowning; in the fifth, they lose 1d6. None of this, of course, makes much difference in the context of the game. You could give the PCs a thousand points to spend on skills and a psychiatrist on permanent retainer, but as likely as not they'd still end up as Happy Meals for Cthulhu and his chums.

The remaining nips and tucks range from the useful to the trivial. Insanity variants allow deranged characters to gain "unnatural insight" into a current crisis, meaning that the referee relays a helpful piece of information if the player's roll is high enough. New PC occupations include Clergymen, Hobo, and Military Commander. A dozen skills have been added, such as Electronics and Martial Arts, while others have been bundled into single skills. The new Medicine skill, for example, encompasses the Diagnose Disease, Treat Disease, and Treat Poison skills from the fourth edition. Customized Investigator sheets cover the 1890s and 1990s as well as the 1920s, ready-made for the CoC game's popular *Cthulhu by Gaslight* and *Cthulhu Now* supplements. Careful readers will discover that the Sanity penalty for finding a mangled animal corpse has dropped from 1d3 points to 1d2; adjust your campaign accordingly.

In addition to a few dozen new spells and monsters, the rest of the book features a broad assortment of source material, most of it unfamiliar but all of it eminently readable. A bibliography of Mythos tomes not only provides physical descriptions of each text (*Azathoth and Others* is a 3.5"x 5.5" book of poetry, bound in black), but also tells the press run (350 copies of *Eltdown Shards*) and the current whereabouts of existing editions (copies of the *Massa Di Requiem Per Shuggay* can be found in the British Museum, the Bibliotheque Nationale in France, and the Vatican's Z-collection). The Keeper's Lore chapter offers practical advice on structuring campaigns and adjudicating insanity. Expanded equipment tables, statistics for key characters from Lovecraft's stories, and some extra scenarios (including the superb "Dead-Man Stomp," imported from the *Keeper's Kit* supplement) boost the page count from 192 in the fourth edition to a 240 in the fifth.

The page count in the new GURPS HORROR book has also jumped (from 96 to 128), this despite the elimination of large chunks of material from the original. The magic and psionics chapters have been jettisoned; the material now fills separate books titled, appropriately enough, the GURPS MAGIC* and GURPS PSIONICS* tomes. Gone, too, is the first edition's "Haunting of Langley Manor" adventure—a minor loss at best.

Otherwise, the approach in the GURPS HORROR book remains the same, a pick-and-choose smorgasbord of ideas that touches on a variety of familiar horror themes. There's a little more of everything—more foes (Bigfoot, Manitou) more referee tips (adding symbolism as a subtext, creating crossover campaigns with other GURPS products), and more settings (the Caribbean, the Orient). The Cabal, a secret society of lycanthropes and other supernatural types, was confined to a sidebar in the first edition, but merits a chapter of its own in the new book. The Hollywood Horrors section has been spruced up with well-chosen oddities from some of filmdom's classic atrocities, such as *The Blob* and *The Brain From Planet Arous*.

The scattershot style means that the GURPS HORROR game frustrates as often as it satisfies. Though perceptively written, much of the material suffers from underdevelopment. The Caribbean section, for instance, is only about a page long, and it's potentially the most interesting setting in the book. A couple of pages devoted to demons barely scratches the surface of a tantalizing subject. And while the designers allocate nearly five pages to reviews of their favorite movies and books, Stonehenge and Transylvania rate little more than a sidebar each. A narrower focus would've been more beneficial to players and probably more fun for the designers. A lot of these topics cry out for detailed discussions, maybe even sourcebooks of their own—GURPS B-MOVIES and GURPS PSYCHO-KILLERS books seem like naturals to me.

Evaluation: Though sketchy in places and unfocused as a whole, the GURPS HORROR game still stands as the best horror overview on the market. Referees who enjoy creating their own adventures will find plenty of raw material here, particularly in the Cabal chapter and creature rosters. However, nothing crucial has been added in the new version, certainly nothing that automatically renders the first edition obsolete. Owners of the first edition can safely skip the second and spend their money elsewhere, perhaps on a copy of the GURPS PSIONICS game.

On the other hand, CoC game fans may have to dig into their pockets again, because the new edition is too good to pass up, even for those who've dutifully bought the previous versions. I intended to look only at the new material, but I ended up reading the whole thing from cover to cover and considered it time well spent. As for those who've yet to play the CoC game, buy this version, invest in an old one, or swipe your grandma's copy, but dig one up somewhere and get started. It's an experience no role-player should miss.

Apparitions Sourcebook * * *
128-page softcover book
Mayfair Games Inc. $12
Design: Philip Athans
Editing: Jeff R. Leason
Cover and illustrations: Joe DeVelasco
Graphic design: Mari Paz Cabardo

Lycanthropes Sourcebook * * ½
128-page softcover book
Mayfair Games Inc. $12
Design: Geoff Pass
Cover: Joe DeVelasco
Illustrations: Ken Meyer and Ike Scott
Art director: Ike Scott

Vampires Sourcebook * * * *
128-page softcover book
Mayfair Games Inc. $12
Design: Gali Sanchez and Michael Williams
Editing: Jackie H. Leeper and Drake Mallard
Cover: Joe DeVelasco
Illustrations: Mark Beachum, Joe DeVelasco, Terry Pavlet, Maria Paz Cabardo, and Ike Scott
Art director: Ike Scott

Are these CHILL game supplements the definitive treatments of ghosts, werewolves, and vampires? Not by a long shot. Aside from brief historical summaries and some short scenarios, the books boil down to lists of variants. *Lycanthropes*, for instance, features six different types of shapeshifters, describing the personality, physiology, and background of each; the other two books follow more or less the same format. Significant new rules are few and far between. Referees wanting innovative ideas for creating campaigns or developing their own monsters will have to look elsewhere. The designers have hardly let their imaginations run wild; the approach draws primarily from legends and movies, meeting the expectations of conservative horror buffs but rarely exceeding them. Dracula and the Wolfman are welcome; vampiric Martians and lycanthropic cattle need not apply.

Those still on board, however, will find the books consistently entertaining and filled with interesting material that is intelligently presented. Thanks to the CHILL game's signature graphic style—sort of a cross between a ransom note and an impressionist painting—they're as much fun to look at as read. Because there aren't a lot of rules to navigate, they serve as solid references for horror role-players of all persuasions, not just CHILL game players.

Apparitions covers the most territory, with in excess of two dozen spectral entities discussed at length. The book sorts apparitions into three broad categories: Departed Spirits (conventional ghosts with scores to settle or houses to haunt), Projections (relatively benign spirits that manifest themselves as images to warn or inform), and Independent Creatures of the Unknown (dangerous spirits committed to tormenting humans). The three categories contain several subclasses, among them Ancestral Horrors, Poltergeists, and Gatekeepers. In turn, several specific creatures belong to each subclass; the Ancestral Horrors subclass, for example, includes the Bansidhe (a screeching spirit from Irish folklore), the Bean-Nighe (a spectral peasant woman who hums funeral dirges), and the Screaming Skull (a floating head that won't shut up).

Information about each entity is divided into four sections. The Medium's Introduction provides an overview of the creature, outlining its origins, abilities, and motivations. An Eyewitness Account describes a first-person encounter, presented as a diary excerpt, an interview transcript, or, in one case, a reproduction of a madman's handwritten rantings. The Medium's Conclusions section expands on and clarifies the information in the Introduction, while the Medium's Recommendations section offers specific suggestions for surviving confrontations. For those using the CHILL rules, Knowledge and Research Checks determine how much the PCs know; an L result means the players may read the Medium's Introduction, an M result allows them to read the Eyewitness Account, and so on. This strikes me as awfully generous (shouldn't PCs learn about the monsters though role-playing rather than by reading about them?), but that's a criticism of the CHILL system, not the sourcebooks.

As for the apparitions themselves, they're a delightfully nasty bunch, guaranteed to befuddle smug players who think they've seen everything. The Utburd derives from the spirit of a dead child, bent on clawing out the eyes of its mother and anyone else who gets in its way. Entombing cats or sheep in the walls of a church produces Kirkevares, silent phantoms whose appearance may signal the destruction of an entire village. Crouched beside a secluded stream, the Bean-Nighe contentedly beats her shrouds against the rocks, wringing out a seemingly endless amount of fresh blood. Even inanimate objects may generate ghostly counterparts; mist-enshrouded Riderless Carriages race across the countryside at unearthly speeds, while huge Spectral Castles arise in thunderstorms to launch catapults at startled passers-by.

Though vivid descriptions illuminate the text, there's a disappointing absence of actual illustrations. I'd have preferred pictures in place of the full pages devoted to quotations (they got one wrong anyway; the quote about the doors, between the known and unknown comes from Aldous Huxley, not Jim Morrison). The "Visitation" scenario fails to take advantage of the books best creatures, resulting in an unmemorable plot. And why did the designer inexplicably abandon the Eyewitness Accounts in the last few chapters? Did he run out of space?

Space is also a problem in *Lycanthropes*, but for a different reason—there's too much of it. Thanks to 3" margins and the art director's fondness for huge areas of nothingness, most pages contain only a few hundred words. That's a shame, because the designer could've used the extra room. There's plenty of material about werewolves, but weretigers, werebears, and other unusual types are shortchanged to the point of exclusion. In fairness, the designer notes his bias in the introduction, and with a picture of a blood-drooling wolf ready to pounce, no one could claim the cover is misleading. But that doesn't make the narrow focus any less disappointing. I've docked the rating a half-star for stinginess.

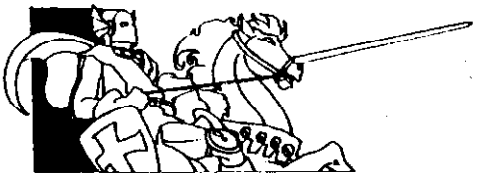
Grumbles aside, the book should satisfy all but the most discriminating werewolf aficionado. The background essays examining the history and legends of werewolves are informative and enlightening. It's noted, for instance, that rumors of lycanthropy in Nigeria around the turn of the century resulted in a ban on firearms to prevent the Nigerians from shooting each other. The mayor of Ansback, Germany, was put to death in 1685 for being a werewolf, as was a one-armed woman named Jean de Nynauld, whom a woodcutter claimed was actually a wolf with a missing leg. Not only are the anecdotes fascinating reading, they're excellent springboards for adventures. Though the prose rarely sparkles, and occasionally lapses into melodramatic mush ("Through mists of slender fingers I walk . . . Destiny lies ahead through the darkening forest of lost memories. . ."), overall, it's adequately written and well-organized.

The book divides lycanthropy into six groups, each based on a particular affliction or set of symptoms. The Lycanthropic Disorder group encompasses victims suffering from mental problems; these poor souls don't actually transform into animals, though many believe they do. Shapeshifters capable of becoming animals at will belong to the Infective Lycanthropes group. Inherent Lycanthropes, the most common type, become animals only during a full moon. The remaining groups include Magical Lycanthropes (shapeshifting magicians), Astral Lycanthropes (individuals using astral projection to transform their psyches into animals), and Wolfen (savage urban killers). Each group receives its own chapter, complete with CHILL statistics for representative crea-

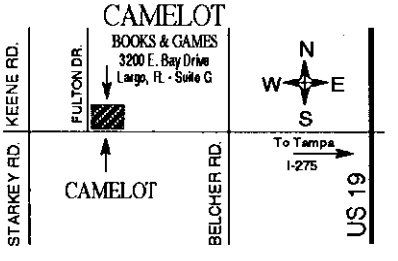
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tures, ecological notes, and case histories. Two brief scenarios complete the book, both of them fairly routine.

Unlike *Lycanthropes* and *Apparitions*, *Vampires* concentrates on specific personalities rather than general archetypes. It's an impressively diverse collection. For example, the elegant Anton Garnier hails from Switzerland where he's rumored to drink human blood to help him tolerate the harsh weather. A world away in the jungles of Mexico, the High Priest Huitzotl presides over ghoulish rituals atop a granite pyramid, where he transforms into a gargantuan warrior before feasting on human offerings from his fanatical congregation. The corpselike Nishi Oka terrorizes Japan with supernatural martial arts, while New Orleans native Jackson De La Croix, who'd be right at home in an Anne Rice novel, fronts a rock band to give him easy access to nubile victims.

Of course, no treatise of this sort would be complete without Dracula, and *Vampires* doesn't disappoint. The Count gets a royal treatment, highlighted by a thorough accounting of his activities beginning in 15th-century Transylvania and continuing through his alleged sightings in 20th-century England. As it does for each entry, the book provides complete CHILL statistics for Dracula, including his powers, weaknesses, and quirks.

What makes *Vampires* the best of the CHILL sourcebooks—in fact, one of the best horror sourcebooks, period—is the quality of the writing. Authors Gali Sanchez and Michael Williams employ a controlled, eloquent style that captures both the sensuality and otherworldliness of the undead. Here, for instance, is our first look at Anton Garnier: "The expression on his face seldom changed, retaining a distant formality. His skin was pallid, and the whites of his eyes were a bloodshot pink that I scarcely noticed at the time. His pupils were deep transparent red, much like the color of a full red wine . . . his teeth so white and healthy that they almost shone . . ."

The "Vengeance of Dracula" scenario ends the book with more of a fizzle than a bang. After a promising beginning, the adventure degenerates into a series of ho-hum scares and an unsatisfying finale. A few more contemporary vampires would've been welcome—surely there must be a couple in the Senate—but these are incidental criticisms of an otherwise beautiful effort.

Evaluation: Players and referees alike should get a kick out these engaging books, *Vampires* and *Apparitions* in particular, and to a lesser extent, the stinted but well-intentioned *Lycanthropes*. I would've liked stronger scenarios and a few more adventure hooks, but all in all, the fastidious research, evocative writing, and enthusiasm for the material makes for a winning combination. I'm looking forward to future volumes.

Short and sweet

Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts, by William W. Connors. TSR Inc., $11. One of the better RAVENLOFT supplements, this volume provides workable suggestions for incorporating the incorporeal into gothic horror campaigns. The book sorts spooks into several general categories according their power levels (first through fifth magnitude), physical appearance (spectral, humanoid, bestial), and origin (sudden death, reincarnation, dark pacts). By shuffling the characteristics associated with these and other categories, the DUNGEON MASTER™ can create customized spirits for all occasions. Ghostly powers and vulnerabilities are discussed at length, and a chapter devoted to the investigation of hauntings provides interesting springboards for supernatural adventures. Though generally well-written, the designer should've ditched the first-person approach ("In this book, I shall attempt to put forth all that I have learned . . . I have organized the information into the following chapters . . ."), which is not only distracting but inappropriate for what is essentially a rule book.

Kingsport, the City in the Mists, by Kevin A. Ross with Mark Morrison, Keith Herber, and Scott Aniolowski. Chaosium Inc., $19. Kingsport, a sleepy fishing village on the coast of Massachusetts, played only a minor role in Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos stories, but you'd never know it from the lavish attention it receives in this CoC game supplement. Similar in format to *Arkham Unveiled* and *Return to Dunwich*, the previous entries in this entertaining series of tourist guides, *City in the Mists* describes Kingsport's history, personalties, and key locales in exquisitely creepy detail. Danny Houghton, a 95-year-old resident of St. Erasmus' Home for Mariners, tells anyone who'll listen about the strange fish-heads poking through the surface of the ocean after his fishing fleet was destroyed. Over on Water Street sits the ivy-covered shack of Captain Richard Holt, better known as the Terrible Old Man, who collects bottles containing lead pendulums that sway back and forth to tap out messages from the dead. Then there's the fellow on Summit Street who is—how do I put this delicately?—a mere shell of his former self. Though the three adventures that end the book make good use of the seaside setting, the plots are merely adequate, relying too heavily on dreams and not enough on Mythos-related encounters. Given the level of activity in Kingsport, however, formal scenarios aren't really necessary. Player characters will find plenty to do just wandering the streets and knocking on doors—and, if they lose their way, they can ask Captain Holt.

Twilight Nightmares, by Charles E. Gannon, Lester Smith, Craig Sheeley, Frank Chadwick, Legion McRae, and Loren K. Wiseman. GDW, Inc, $12. Great ideas turn up in the strangest places. Who'd have thought the TWILIGHT: 2000* game, a terrific but rather staid military RPG, would work so well with dinosaurs, space monsters, and other cheesy critters from the Late Show? *Twilight Nightmares* peels 10 plot lines from the drive-in screen and serves them up as RPG adventures, as fun to read as they are to play. As with most multi-author anthologies, the quality is all over the map, but there are at least two certifiable gems. Charles Gannon's "You're Not From Around Here, Are You?" pits a group of mercenaries against a murderous three-eyed alien in the jungles of Brazil; it's a beautifully staged nail-biter with a memorable villain and loads of atmosphere. "Warlord," by Frank Chadwick, finds the PCs in the middle of nowhere defending themselves against an apparently unmotivated assault from a robotic tank; it starts with a bang, ends with a twist, and features plenty of tense moments along the way. TWILIGHT: 2000 game veterans with humor impairments may find all this hard to swallow, but anyone with a soft spot in his heart for giant ants will have a picnic with *Twilight Nightmares*.

Creatures of Orrorsh, developed and edited by Bill Smith and Ed Stark. West End Games, $18. If you thought the CoC game had cornered the market in bizarre monsters, guess again. *Creatures of Orrorsh*, a supplement for the TORG* game, collects 60 grotesque beasts, creeps, and freaks that comprise the most stomach-turning menagerie this side of a splatter-film festival. The Brain Swarm, for instance, is a group of mutated aphids that burrows though the ear of a human host to nibble on his brain tissue. Grave Spawn are puddles of black ooze that gurgle in the coffins of dead ocultists. My favorite, the Vaskk, resembles a mobile human circulatory system that slices up prey with its razor-edged capillaries. Each entry fills a two-page spread, complete with an illustration, a domain map, and TORG game statistics, all of it nicely done. Incidently, the books authors are the winners of a contest sponsored by West End's *Infiniverse* newsletter that challenged the readers to come up with "the most loathsome, hideous, evil, repulsive, repugnant, horrifying, and disgusting creatures ever created for a role-playing game." Mission accomplished. Ω

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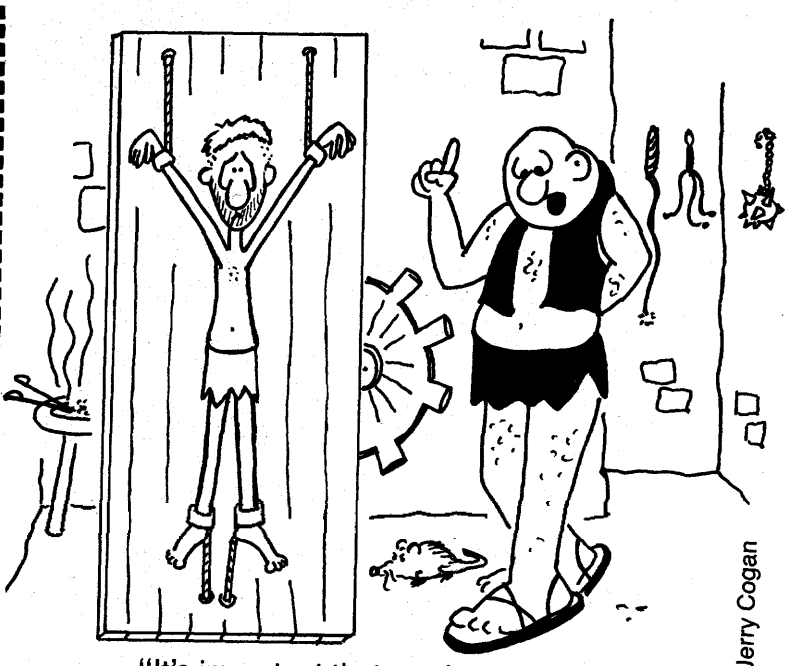
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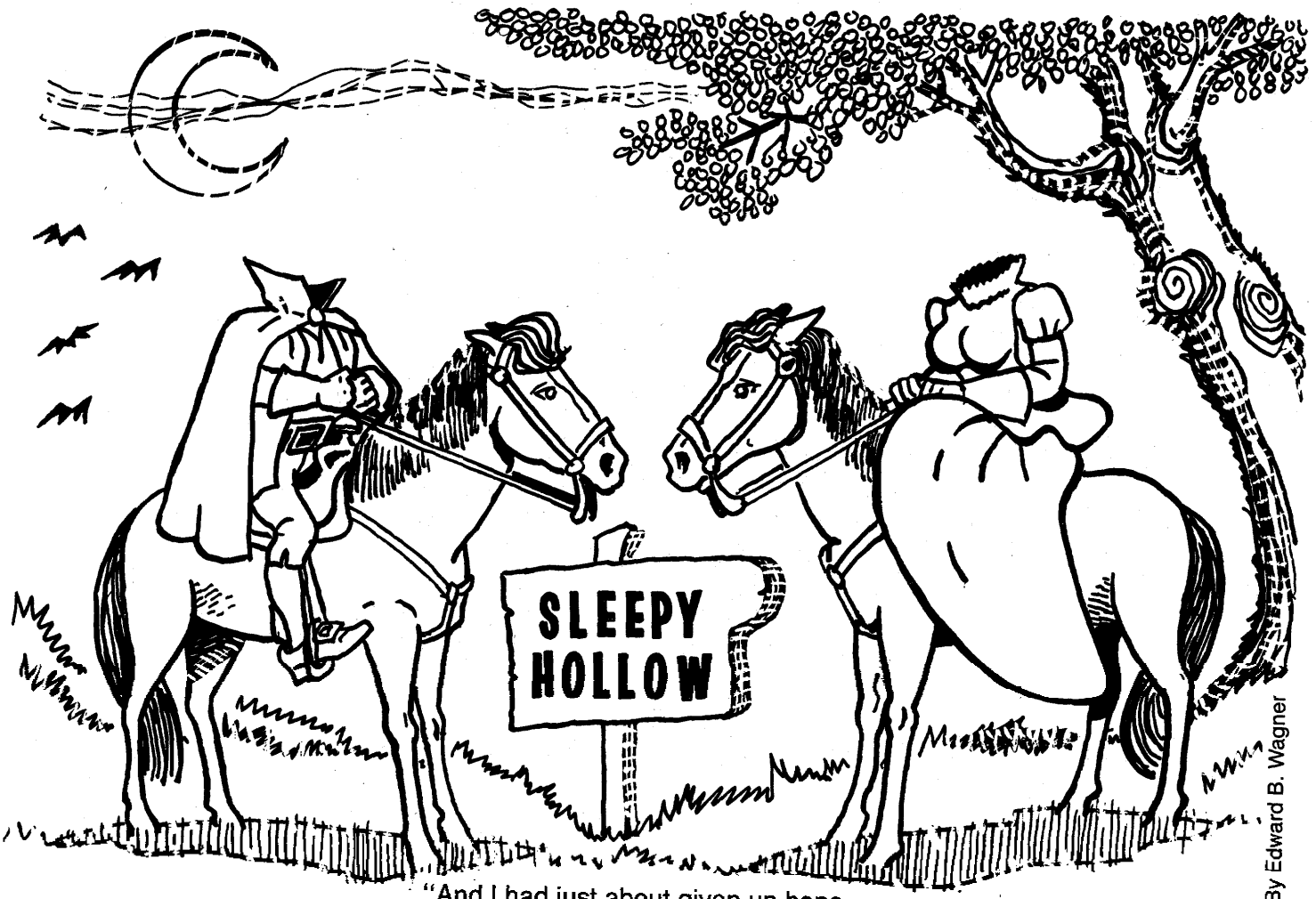


By Jon Carter



"It's important that we do some stretching first, so we don't pull a muscle during your workout."

By Jerry Cogan



"And I had just about given up hope of ever meeting *'Miss Right.'*"

E, B, Wagner

By Edward B. Wagner

By Mark Hirschler



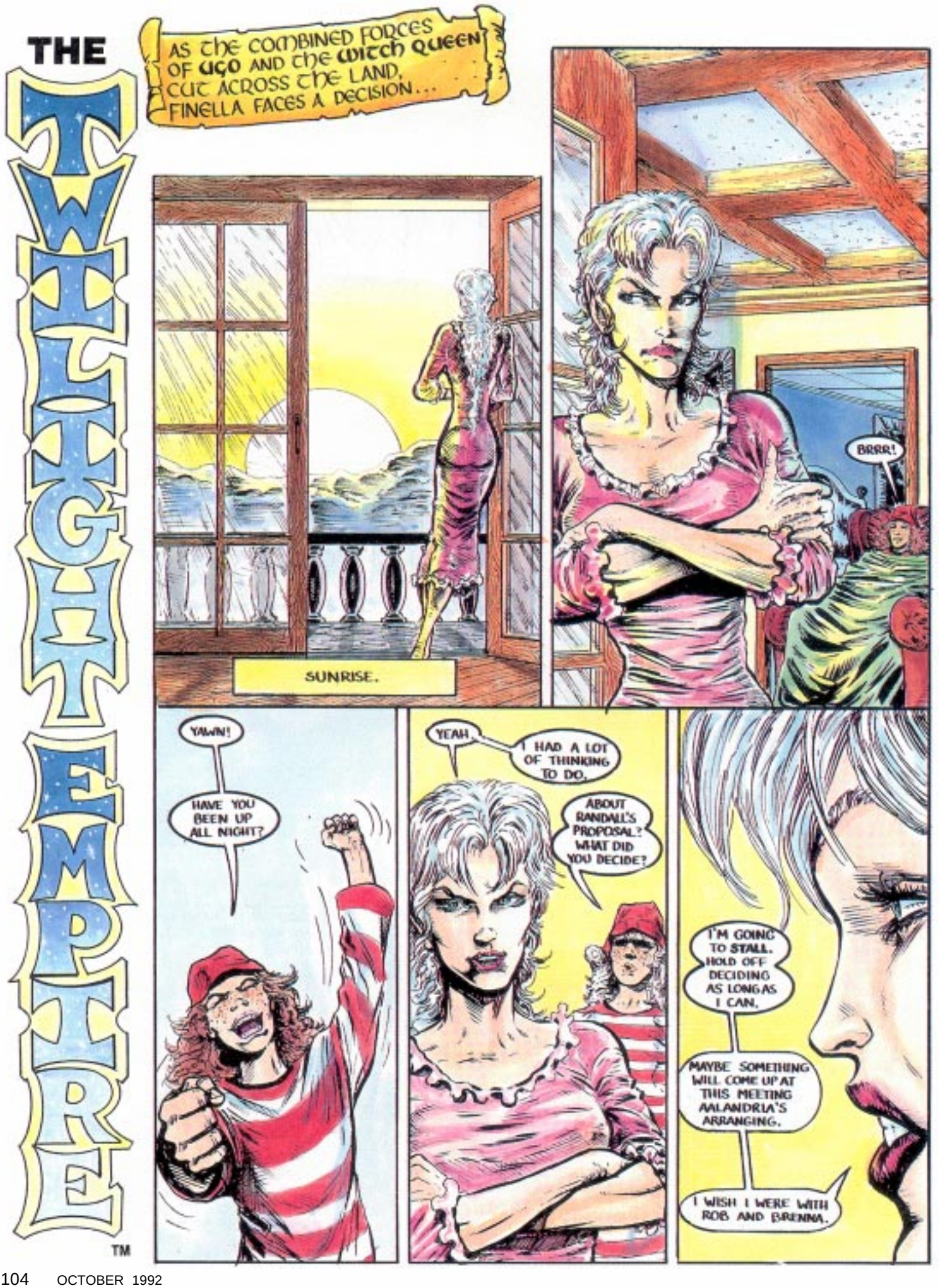
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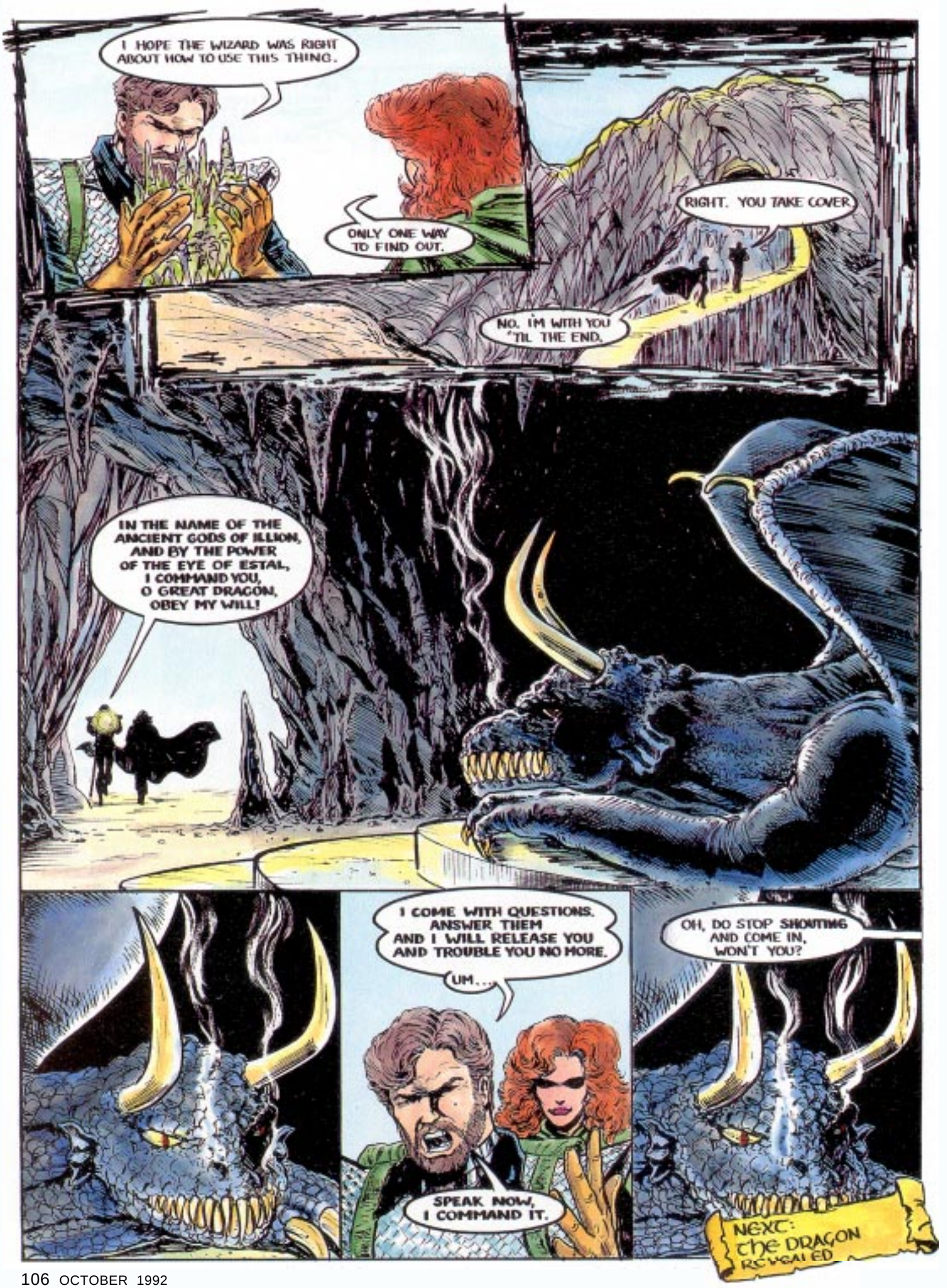
"I say we cut him in half to see how old he is."

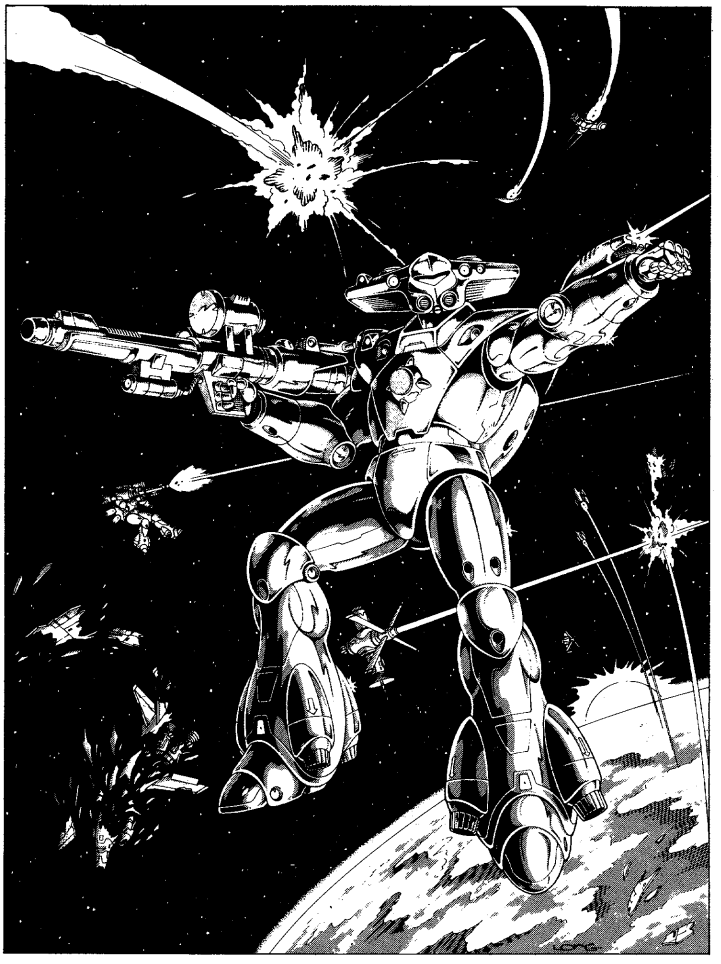


By Barbara Manui & Chris Adams


THE
TWILIGHT EMPIRE
TM
AS THE COMBINED FORCES OF UGO AND THE WITCH QUEEN CUT ACROSS THE LAND, FINELLA FACES A DECISION...
SUNRISE.
BRRR!
YAWN!
HAVE YOU BEEN UP ALL NIGHT?
YEAH
I HAD A LOT OF THINKING TO DO.
ABOUT RANDALL'S PROPOSAL? WHAT DID YOU DECIDE?
I'M GOING TO STALL. HOLD OFF DECIDING AS LONG AS I CAN.
MAYBE SOMETHING WILL COME UP AT THIS MEETING AALANDRIA'S ARRANGING.
I WISH I WERE WITH ROB AND BRENNA.


"...I'D RATHER FACE A DOZEN DRAGONS THAN MAKE THIS DECISION."
CAREFUL. WATCH YOUR FOOTING.
I REMEMBERED SOMETHING LAST NIGHT.
I'M SURE MY EX-WIFE ABANDONED MY DAUGHTER AND ME, THAT'S WHY I EVENTUALLY DIVORCED HER.
HA HA. HOW ROMANTIC.
MMM. SORRY.
BUT LOOK, I'VE BEEN DOING A LOT OF THINKING. MY MEMORY'S STILL FUZZY IN PLACES...
BUT I THINK I MUST HAVE LEFT HOME DELIBERATELY.
I MEAN, I BROUGHT THIS SWORD, THESE CLOTHES, THE BACKPACK, AND WHATEVER STUFF THE JENRATS THREW OFF THE CLIFF.
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ROBINSON'S WAR
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MAYBE THERE WERE MORE CLUES TO MY MISSION THERE. I WISH WE'D SEARCHED.
FAR TOO LATE NOW. FLOODING FROM SUMMER RAINS WILL HAVE WASHED THAT DEFILE CLEAN LONG AGO.
WHATEVER YOU LOST THERE IS GONE FOREVER.
ULP.
I THINK WE'RE HERE.
YOU'D BEST GET OUT THE CRYSTAL.
WHOOOOOO


I HOPE THE WIZARD WAS RIGHT ABOUT HOW TO USE THIS THING.
ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.
RIGHT. YOU TAKE COVER.
NO. I'M WITH YOU 'TIL THE END.
IN THE NAME OF THE ANCIENT GODS OF ILLION, AND BY THE POWER OF THE EYE OF ESTAL, I COMMAND YOU, O GREAT DRAGON, OBEY MY WILL!
I COME WITH QUESTIONS. ANSWER THEM AND I WILL RELEASE YOU AND TROUBLE YOU NO MORE.
UM...
SPEAK NOW, I COMMAND IT.
OH, DO STOP SHOUTING AND COME IN, WON'T YOU?
NEXT: the DRAGON REVEALED



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Rifts®, the basic RPG

The British magazine, Gamesmannot only voted **Rifts®** as one of "the 30 greatest games of all time," but ranked the RPG as, "a classic of classics!"

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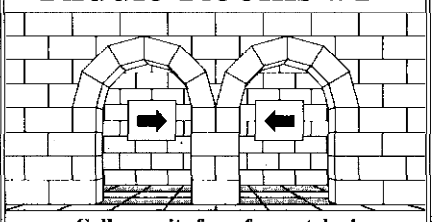
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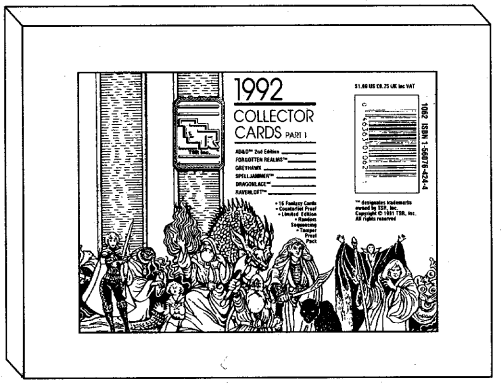
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Through the Looking Glass

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Photos by Mike Bethke



Fantasy Classics: Were Creatures (Grenadier Models)

A menacing menagerie of macabre miniatures

October is traditionally the month for horror-related reviews and the teasing of the darker side of the imagination. This month is no exception, as I'll be examining many menacing miniatures.

Reviews

Grenadier Models
P.O. Box 305
Springfield PA 19064

Grenadier Models UK Ltd.
25 Babbage Rd.
Deeside, Clwyd
UNITED KINGDOM CH5 2QB

305 Fantasy Classics: Were Creatures * * * * ½

The Were Creatures package from Grenadier contains three creatures made of lead, scaled to 25 mm. All are on oval bases with minimal landscaping or texture. The first is an ape with a warty, hairless chest and stomach, and hairy arms, legs, and back. The gorilla-like face has fangs and pointed ears. The figure had some flash between the body and arm, and a slight mold line extended down the left side and leg.

The boar figure has a full mane of hair stretching from its forehead to its lower back. The feet are cloven, and the hands curl into talons. Huge tusks extend upward from the lower jaw. The snout is well detailed and offsets the sunken eyes. An interesting detail is a slightly battered shirt of chain mail secured by a belt and buckle. There was little flash on this figure and no mold line.

The last figure is a traditional werewolf perched on a small rocky hill. The spine is clearly etched and ends in a short tail. Muscle detail is very good. The face looks more like that of an Egyptian god than that of a wolf, but the effect is very good. The ears are long, pointed, and joined together, although a careful separation of the ears enhances the figure's appearance. There was some flash on the legs and stomach and by the raised paw, but it was easily removed without damaging the detail.

These are highly recommended, forming a good mixture of figures available at $3.95 per package.

5607 Undead Champion * * * * ½

This being wears a rotted surcoat that stretches from its shoulders to the ground. Its bones are stripped of flesh. Ailettes (metal plates) protect both shoulders, and a basinet with nasal helm covers its head. Mouth open, it seems to order other undead onward into battle. A huge pitted sword is held straight out from its body in both hands.

The figure had flash by its base and light flash around its sword. The open-mouth detail can be improved by using the point of a knife and carefully opening the mouth cavity. The chest and back clearly show ribs but need some cleaning to accent the spaces. This is well recommended at $1.75.

5608 Undead Standard Bearer * * * *

This huge standard bearer has stuck its pole into the ground and drawn its sword, looking for enemies. The rough-cut flag with tattered edges is connected to a tree-limb pole joined by rivets. The undead's decomposed face is twisted into a grimace; strands of hair protrude from beneath a helmet. Overlapping plate armor extends to its bony foot, the plate covered by a surcoat riddled with holes. Eyes stare out from deep within their sockets.

This figure is definitely not scaled to 25 mm, as it measures 28½ mm to the eyes. The figure is on a small base that requires

Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
* *	Below average
* * *	Average
* * * *	Above average
* * * * *	Excellent

trimming and leveling. Flash was at every opening and niche, and it had to be cleaned out carefully. The sword is thick until it reaches the standard pole, then appears to almost join with the pole; it looks strange when closely examined. This piece does allow for a variety of flags to be displayed; otherwise, it is a low-priority item unless you have a lot of Games Workshop undead figures to go with it. It is available for $1.75.

51017 Undead Warriors ****

This set contains five different undead warriors, all scaled at 25 to 27 mm, made of lead, and set on small, thick bases.

Figure one is an almost bald man with vacant eye sockets, a short beard, and hair on the back of the head. His ears have rotted away. A long, torn robe covers his body except for the peeling flesh and exposed bone on feet and arms. He is armed with a round, riveted shield and sword. No flash was present on this figure, and the detailing is good except on some bones.

Figure two is armed with a huge mace and has a belt pouch and rotted belt. Its armor consists of a mail hood, shoulder protection, and knee plates. The figure appears to have been a cleric in life, as it has a holy symbol on its chest. The figure is wrapped in rags as if it were mummified. Almost no flash was on this figure, but an obvious mold line needs careful cleaning.

Figure three holds a skull shield and a long sword. Missing teeth accent the dead face. Its ribs are visible but not well defined. Rotting clothes with a variety of holes hang from its frame. A helmet protects the skull, and the remains of a hatband fall to mid-back. This figure has little flash. The bones are exaggerated in size.

Figure four was a human fighter. Well-defined ribs and spine show through the tattered clothes, and its pants hang from its waist with a huge gap. The ears have rotted away; open lesions are visible on the face and back of the skull. This undead has a two-handed sword ready to swing. There was no flash, but the mold line was raised and had to be cleaned.

The last figure appeared to have once been an elven cavalier or rogue, wearing high-topped boots rolled down to mid-calf and knee protectors, with no other armor. The remains of its hair falls to its shoulders; sunken cheeks and eyes highlight the effects of death. One ear is up and slightly pointed, while half of the other is missing. Rotting, tattered clothes are secured by a belt. Well-crafted ribs show through a tear in the shirt. This figure, too, has a sword wound up to swing, but this sword is thick and appears to be sharpened on only one side. There was no flash, and the mold lines were hidden and did not need work.

These figures do appear to be more in tune to the larger "25 mm" scales and could serve as commanders in larger armies. There is some work involved in preparing them, and careful painting increases the available detail. This set is a fairly good buy at $5.95 per pack of five.



Undead Standard Bearer and Champion (Grenadier Models)



Undead Warriors (Grenadier Models)

66 Creature of the Crypt ***½

The Creature of the Crypt is a mini-diorama piece. The miniature has a one-piece casting of an arch or tomb door in a rocky setting. The arch is carved with pictures depicting events including a battle with a winged creature and the receiving of tablets, crowned by either a winged demon or a truly ugly cat. The center of the arch is supposed to be a closed, mortared tomb with a creature tearing its way out. The creature seems to be a cross between a troll and an orc. Huge teeth and tusks add to the portent of doom. The creature is dressed in rotting clothes, but there does not appear to be any rot on its body. This may be the demon from the picture.

This piece has limited uses for gaming and would be a much more effective piece if a miniature of the creature from the tomb were included. The piece cannot stand without support. Save your money unless you wish to make a graveyard scene. It costs $3.95 each.



Creature of the Crypt (Grenadier Models)

5606 Wraith ****

Skin still shows through the tears in this monster's tattered robe. Its face has disappeared, leaving only spots for eyes and a head-shaped bulge under its hood. A sword blade rests easily in its right hand, and the top of a coffin serves as a shield on its left side. The figure stands about 28 mm full height and is just under 25 mm tall in its leaning position. Small pieces of lead from vent holes appear on the shield, but otherwise there was little flash and no major mold lines. This piece is highly recommended as representing a beginner wraith. The price is $1.75 each.

306 Fantasy Classics: Mummies ****½

The Mummies set contains four different lead pieces, including a coffin with a bas-relief top done in Egyptian-style markings and a bottom containing a wrapped mummy about 29 mm in length. The two halves fit together nicely, but there is no lip to ensure the two pieces stay together. The other two mummies consist of a walking male figure practically right out of the horror movies and a slender female with an exposed, aristocratic face, long hair, and a snake tiara. Her face is pinched and her cheeks are gaunt, but there are no signs of other preservation. Her left hand rests on a pillar with symbols carved on it.

The figures, except for the female, are slightly over 28 mm. The male mummies have shallow engraving on their wrappings, so take care when painting them or the detail may be lost. There was flash on the two coffin parts and the arm of the male mummy; careful cleaning is needed on these and the back mold line on the male to guarantee the wrappings won't be marred or the lid damaged. The female mummy has no flash and is well done, if a little skinny. The 13 mm pedestal also has no flash or other detractions. These pieces are highly recommended for gaming adventures or dioramas at $3.95 per pack.



Wraith (Grenadier Models)



Grave Lich (RAFM Company)

Lance and Laser

P.O. Box 14491
Columbus OH 43214

130 Impaled Victim ****½

This lead miniature is 48 mm high, set on an oval base. The central stake has a small pile of rocks at its base and supports a human body, the stake driven through the pelvis, chest, and skull. The skull is cracked on top and devoid of skin, with its mouth open as if in a silent scream. Bony arms are shackled behind its back and through the sides of its belt. A mangled chain-mail shirt covers its chest, but parts of the spine, ribs, and the pole are still exposed. The pants have rotted into a pile of rags. Some skin remains on the left leg, but bony feet protrude. The legs appear to grip the pole. There is absolutely no flash on this figure; you have to look hard to find any mold lines. This model is highly recommended at $1.40 each.



Impaled Victim (Lance and Laser)

136 Two-Headed Undead Ogre ****½

This two-headed monster stands over 38 mm tall (8′ in scale) and is almost 20 mm (4′) across the shoulders. The two heads each stare forward, a wild laugh coming from the left head and a lopsided grimace on the right. No blood or ichor flows from an axe wound (including the imbedded axe) in one head. A sword wound on the right side shows only the sword's haft and a small amount of blade. Gnarled hair falls from the two heads onto the shoulder armor. A group of skulls are tied to a wide, studded belt. Bony legs become skeletal feet with rotting banded sandals. The right arm is ready to swing a huge axe with a



Two-Headed Undead Ogre (Lance and Laser)

spiked back, while the left has a spiked gauntlet on the hand.

This is an excellent figure for use with humorous dioramas or as an actual monster in gaming. The multitude of wounds reminds me of the Black Knight in the movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Careful work will allow the hilt and the handle of the imbedded sword to be separated from the body. This is highly recommended at $1.75 per figure.

RAFM Co.
20 Parkhill Rd E
Cambridge, Ontario
CANADA N1R 1P2

3718 Grave Lich *****

Two chiseled pillars soar 14' (in scale measurements) into the air from their square bases, each pillar topped by an urnlike structure. The columns support an arch that appears to be carved from a single block of stone. Seven faces are carved on the block, among them a skull, a face hooded like a snake, a cat person, and a large head with rays coming from it. Vines stretch across the fronts and backs of the columns. The entrance is only 15 mm high (3½' in scale) and only 18 mm deep, even with the step. There is some pitting on the pillars, but no flash or mold lines are visible.

A skeletal, lichlike figure sits by the gate, a staff clutched in its left hand. A flared hat is on its head, and a hatband of woven material joins the ornate decoration on its chest and back. Simple shoulder protectors and falling strips cover a long flowing robe that exposes only the figure's slippers and skeletal hands; a chain belt with skull buckle completes the outfit.

The figure is nice, but the arch has limited uses in spite of being very well done. This is another case where it is a shame that the figure does not come separately. If you want to make a diorama, this piece is highly recommended even at $5.50.

3716 Tomb Wraith and Master *****

The first of these two figures is a young man whose large, hooked nose is his most obvious feature. His mouth is open as if uttering a spell; both hands hold a thick book before him. His clothing consists of a three-tiered vestment with flaps at the top, and a long, smooth robe reaching to the ground. The flaps are surrounded by piping and are under the base of his hood, which rises to a point above his head. The man is 27 mm tall and proportionately built.

Also included is a 60 mm tall (12' in scale) undead form with a long wrinkled cape, clasped at the neck by a simple brooch. Its skull is fully formed, and a crown of hair flows out behind it as if in a breeze. The bald head frames a bitter look on the creature's face. A rib cage is visible under the open cape, but no other bodily parts can be seen. The only other feature are bony hands that stretch out before it.

This two-figure set costs $5.50.



Tomb Wraith and Master (RAFM Company)



Vaporous Grave Horrors (RAFM Company)

3717 Vaporous Grave Horrors *****

The monument here consists of a sloped base of rock with a large stone block on the base. An aged plaque obscured by time and vines decorates the base. An obelisk rises from the stone block, with a flaming, flying skull on its front and a variety of small runes beneath it. Topping the monument is the engraving of a huge gem cut exactly like an eye. Numerous undead spirits with vaporous forms arise from the monument. One is a vaguely female spirit with long hair surrounding a skeletal face. Skeletal arms stretched from the body. Other vapors form skeletal and mythical beasts. This figure costs $5.50.



Zombie with Wooden Club and Skeleton with Halberd (Hobby Products)

Hobby Products
Post Fach 10 10 20
4200 Oberhausen 1
GERMANY

Wargames Inc.
P.O. Box 278
Tridelphia WV 26059

C-1026d Zombie with Wooden Club *****

This zombie is 25 mm to the eyes. Its face and body are partly decomposed, with large amounts of skin peeled back to expose muscle and bone. Its cheeks and eye sockets are sunken, and its clothes are rotted and covered with holes. Muscle detail is plain, as if the body were swollen. The zombie clutches a warped wooden club in its misshapen right hand. There was absolutely no flash on this miniature. This figure is highly recommended for any group of zombies at $1.69.

C-1036i Skeleton with Halberd ****½

This skeletal guard is actually armed with an old runka set on a wooden staff. A tattered suit of chain mail hangs from its shoulders and drops below its knees, which are protected by small metal discs. All clothes and skin have vanished, leaving well-defined bones with the neck, ribs, back, and pelvis visible in part. What really drew our attention was that the skull looks too large for the body supporting it. The skull was also smooth as if sanded.

There was a line of metal from the butt end of the weapon, but it was easy to remove and no trace was left. I found no flash on this miniature and highly recommend it at $1.69 each.





RAVENLOFT® Denizens (Ral Partha Enterprises)

Ral Partha Enterprises
5938 Carthage Ct.
Cincinnati OH 45212

10-511 RAVENLOFT® Denizens *****

The RAVENLOFT boxed set, for use with the AD&D® game's Gothic horror setting, features 10 lead, 25 mm miniatures. First is a long-haired damsel in distress in a tattered dress. She is barefoot and bare-legged, and her bosom is held in by a corsetlike piece of clothing. She seems to be running for her life.

Another young lady in the box is fairly tall, being nearly 6′ in scale height. She wears a long, flowing gown split at the side and cinched by a rope belt. Her curly hair falls to mid-thigh. Her pretty face is marred by fangs, and she clutches a bat in her left hand. She's obviously a vampire (and is so noted on the back of the boxed set).

A third figure is that of Adam, a huge "Frankenstein's monster" creature constructed from the parts of other people. Adam stands 31 mm tall, about 8′ in scale height. His open shirt and holes in his clothing show scarred muscles with sutures visible. His eyes have a haunted stare.

Fourth is Azalin, who governs Darkon (a part of the RAVENLOFT campaign world). Thin flesh stretches over his old bones. He has a piercing glare, and his face is losing its skin. High boots cover his skeletal toes; a cape falls from shoulders to floor. A large sacrificial knife is in his left hand, and a crown rests on his head.

The lands of Hazlan are ruled by an evil mage named Hazlik, the fifth figure here. This mage hates other wizards and kills them on a regular basis. The mage figure wears long red robes secured by a simple belt; the robes are open from the waist up. His chest is tattooed, although many of these tattoos are covered by a large pendant around his neck. An ornate, ruffled collar rounds his neck at the top of his shirt. He has a thin beard, and his bald head is tattooed. With pinched face and sunken cheeks, his look is one of cunning.

The lord of Kartakass is Harkon Lucas, our sixth figure. The miniature is of a pensive figure with his sword stuck point-down into the ground as he looks into the distance. He wears high boots, a jerkin and vest cinched by a wide belt, and a cape; ruffles cover his chest. Long, curly hair falls to his shoulders; a well-done and well-trimmed pointed beard frames his stately face. He carries a harp on his back, a cutlass in his right hand, and a rakish hat with a long plume in his left hand.

Next we have a banshee, a female figure with long curled hair stretching to mid-back. This figure has its arms in the air as if rebuking someone, and has an elongated face with an open mouth.

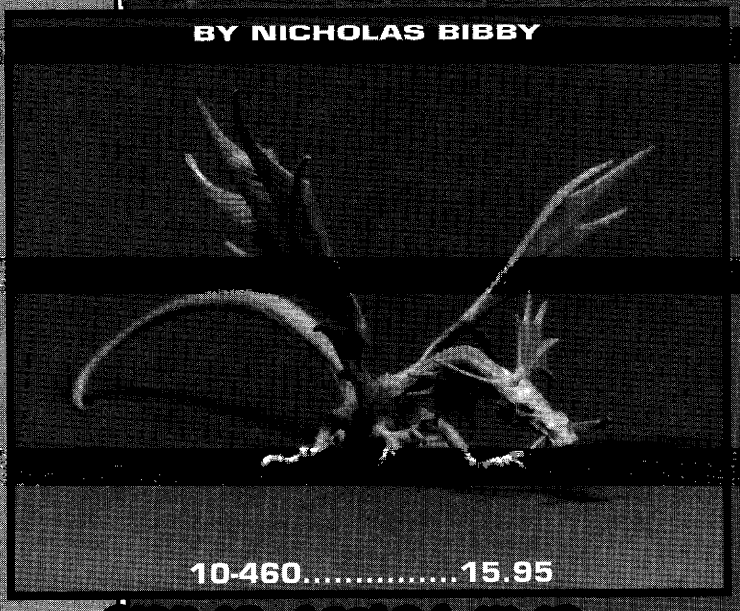
Eighth is a male figure in a dark outfit. A black cape falls from his shoulders, and a muffler is wrapped around the lower part of his face. A tail rises from his strange

SCULPTORS ROW

DRAGONS BY DESIGN

BLACK DRAGON OF FIRE & DARKNESS

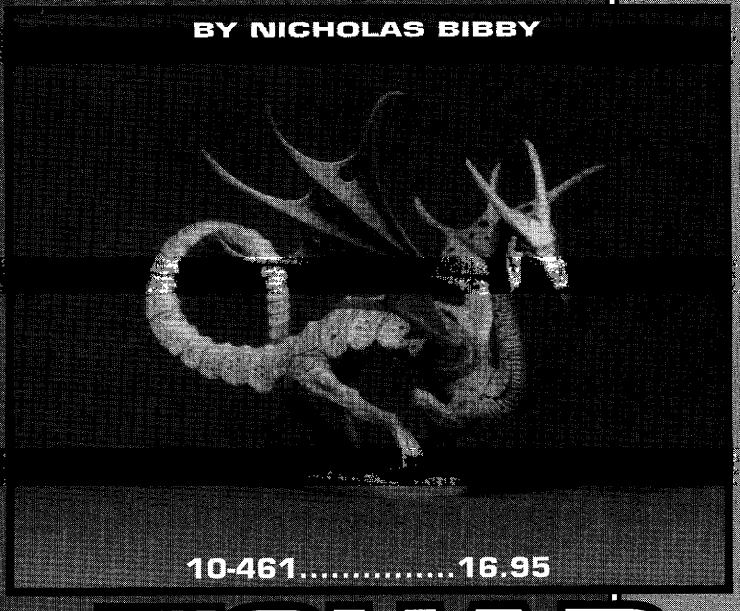
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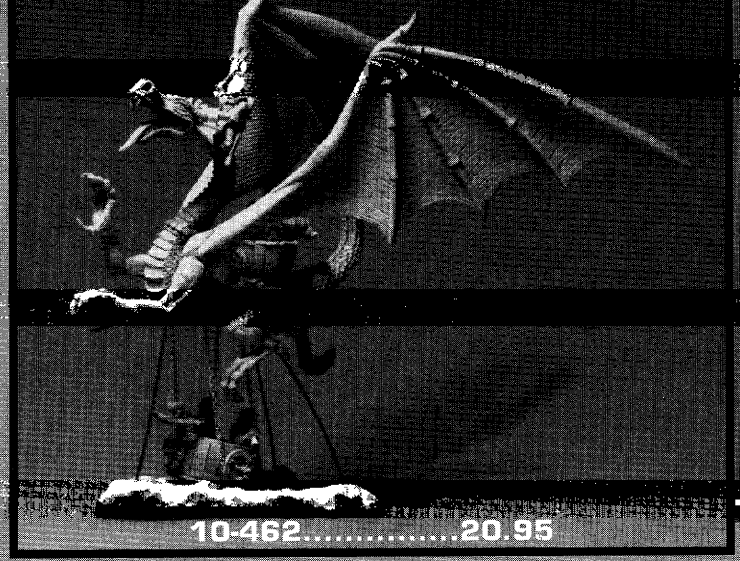
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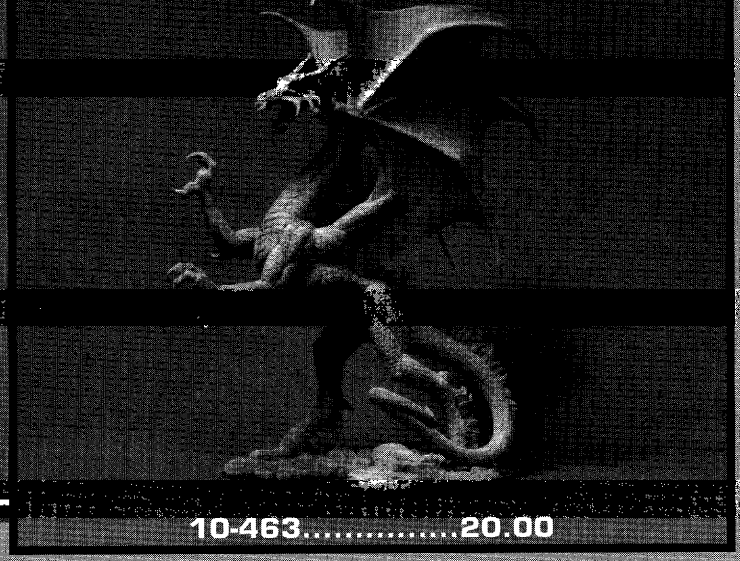
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Village Mob (Ral Partha Enterprises)

crown; his face is completely obscured. His boots and armour are ornately done, and the chain mail is cinched by a wide belt. His arms are crossed in an attitude of belligerence. This large man could only be Lord Soth, of DRAGONLANCE® saga fame.

A dancing gypsy is ninth. She wears slippers, a medium-length skirt, and a blouse. Her legs, hands, and stomach are all exposed. Large circular earrings shake and long hair flows as she dances.

An elegant figure in a suit with cufflinks, a cape with high collar, and a shirt is tenth. You instantly noticed a widow's peak on his forehead and his slicked-back hair. The figure radiates power and strength, and only the hints of fangs mar his face. He is the infamous Count Strahd Von Zarovich, master of Ravenloft!

This set of 10 figures is available for $12.95.

11-105 Village Mob *****

There are seven people in this village mob. The leader is a constable who wears his badge of office on his billed hat. His face glares, and a handlebar moustache graces his upper lip. A fine jacket over a dress shirt and a string tie with flared ends serve to emphasize his formality. A simple pair of shorts and a thin belt complete his upper clothing; his feet are clad in simple sturdy boots. His left hand is clenched in a fist, while in his right he holds a sort of a mace.

The rest of the mob members are townspeople, two of each kind. The merchants are armed with axes and torches but are almost formally dressed. A stovepipe hat with a folded brim covers each one's head, and bushy eyebrows and mutton-chop sideburns outline each jeering face. A formal jacket with medium lapels covers a frilly shirt; simple pants and boots complete the ensemble.

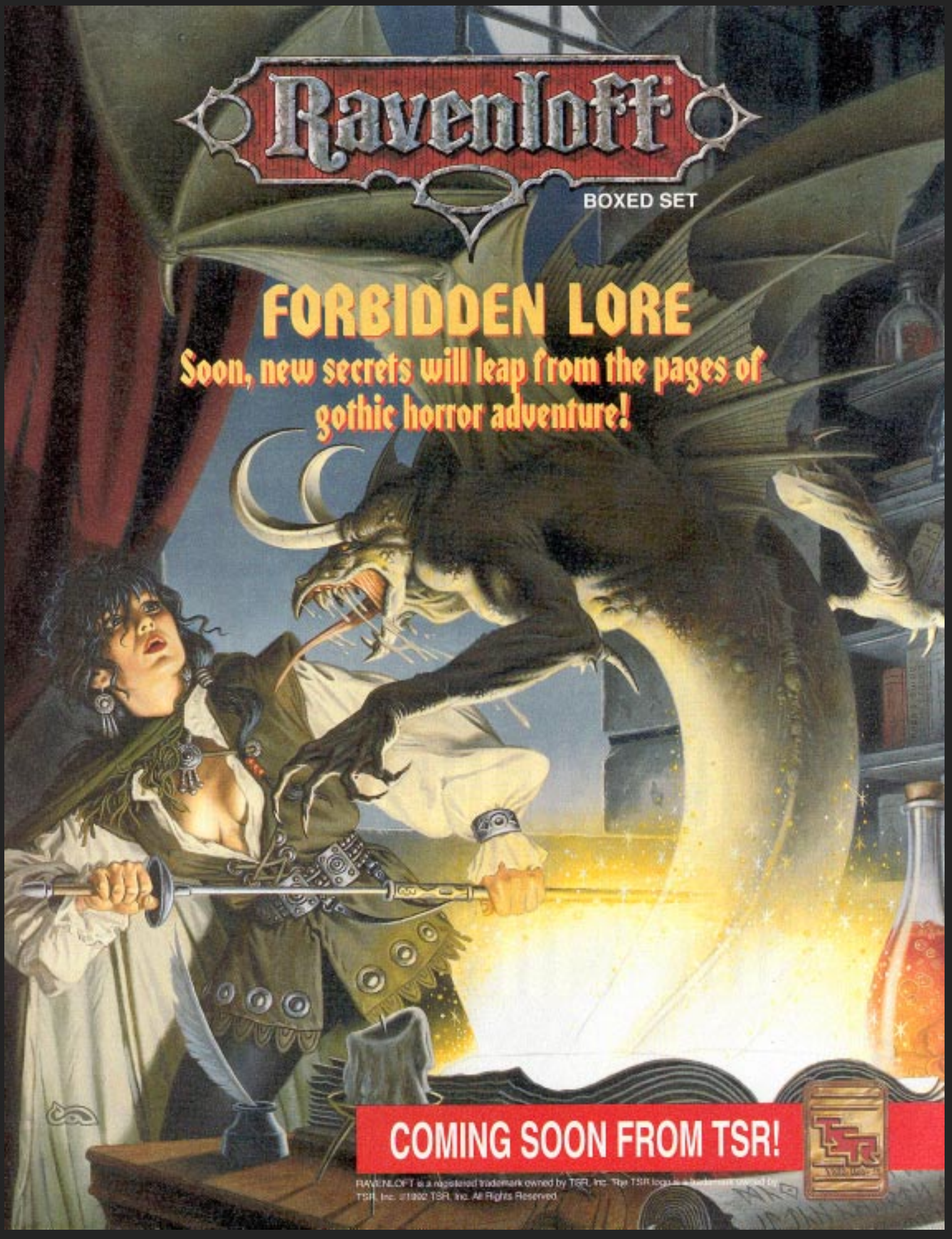
The two farmers are dressed in heavy jeans or pants with back pockets and simple belts and buckles; vests rest over simple rugged shirts with button sleeves. A sharp triangular hat with a feather adorns each head. A simple beard drops from the hairline and covers the base of each jaw. Their faces are rugged and almost exaggerated in appearance, attesting to their time outside. Their use of pitchforks amply demonstrates their anger.

The last two appear to be assistant shopkeepers or general townsfolk. They wear the same kind of short pants as the constable, and they have looks of disdain. The frilly shirts they wear and their decorative vests belie heavy labor. All they clutch in their hands are torches. Moustaches droop over their upper lips, and they wear brimmed hats. All seven are highly recommended to stock a town for only $8.50 a pack.

I want to thank Fred Hicks for his help in painting the mummy and were-creature sets and some of the undead fighters. Eric Petersen painted the arch and lich, and he made sure the damsel and female vampire were finished. I did the rest of the figures myself.

If you want to contact me, write to me at: Friends Hobby Shop, 1411 Washington St., Waukegan IL 60085; or call: (708) 336-0790 MWThF 2P.M.-10P.M. or SatSun 10 A.M.-5P.M. See you next month.

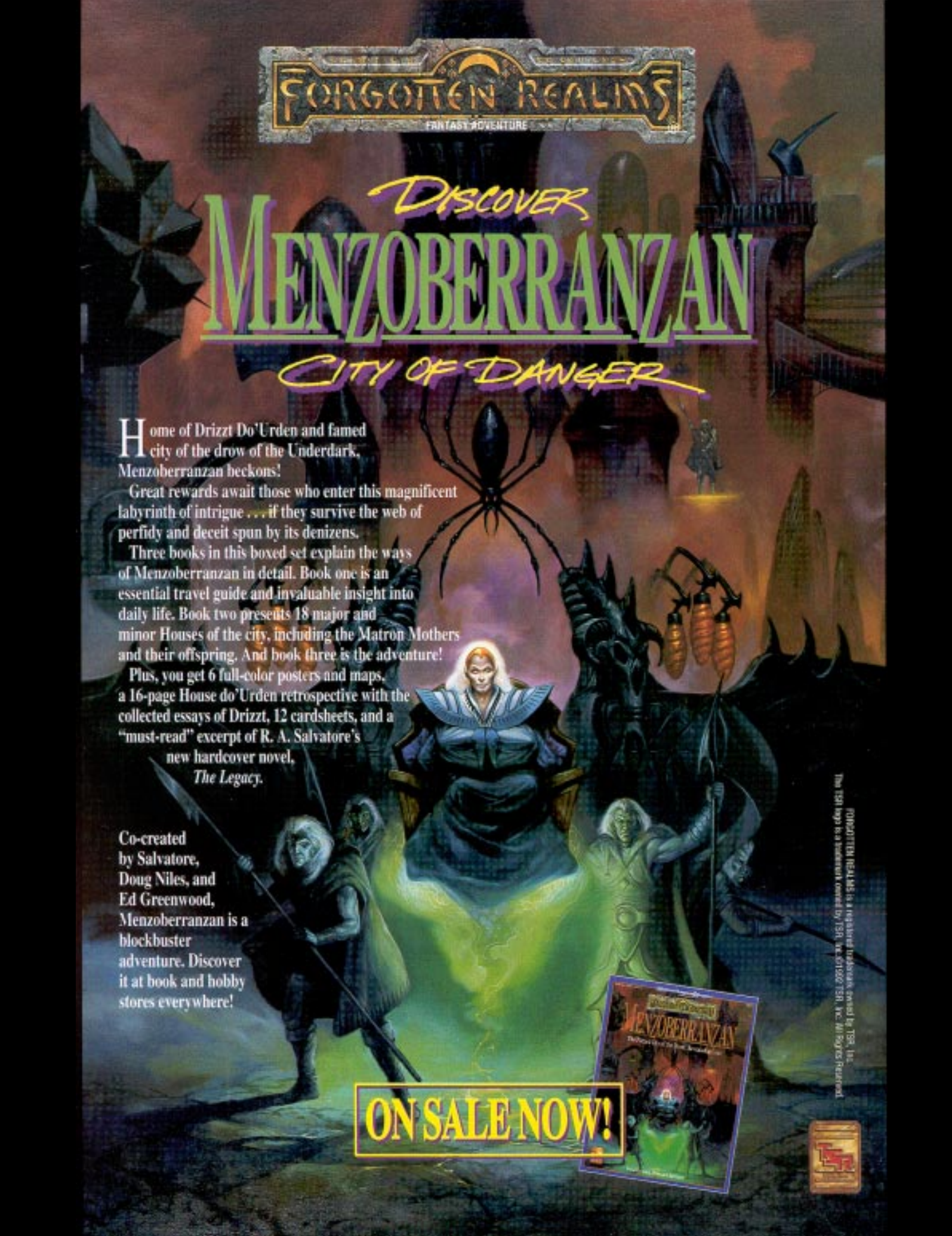



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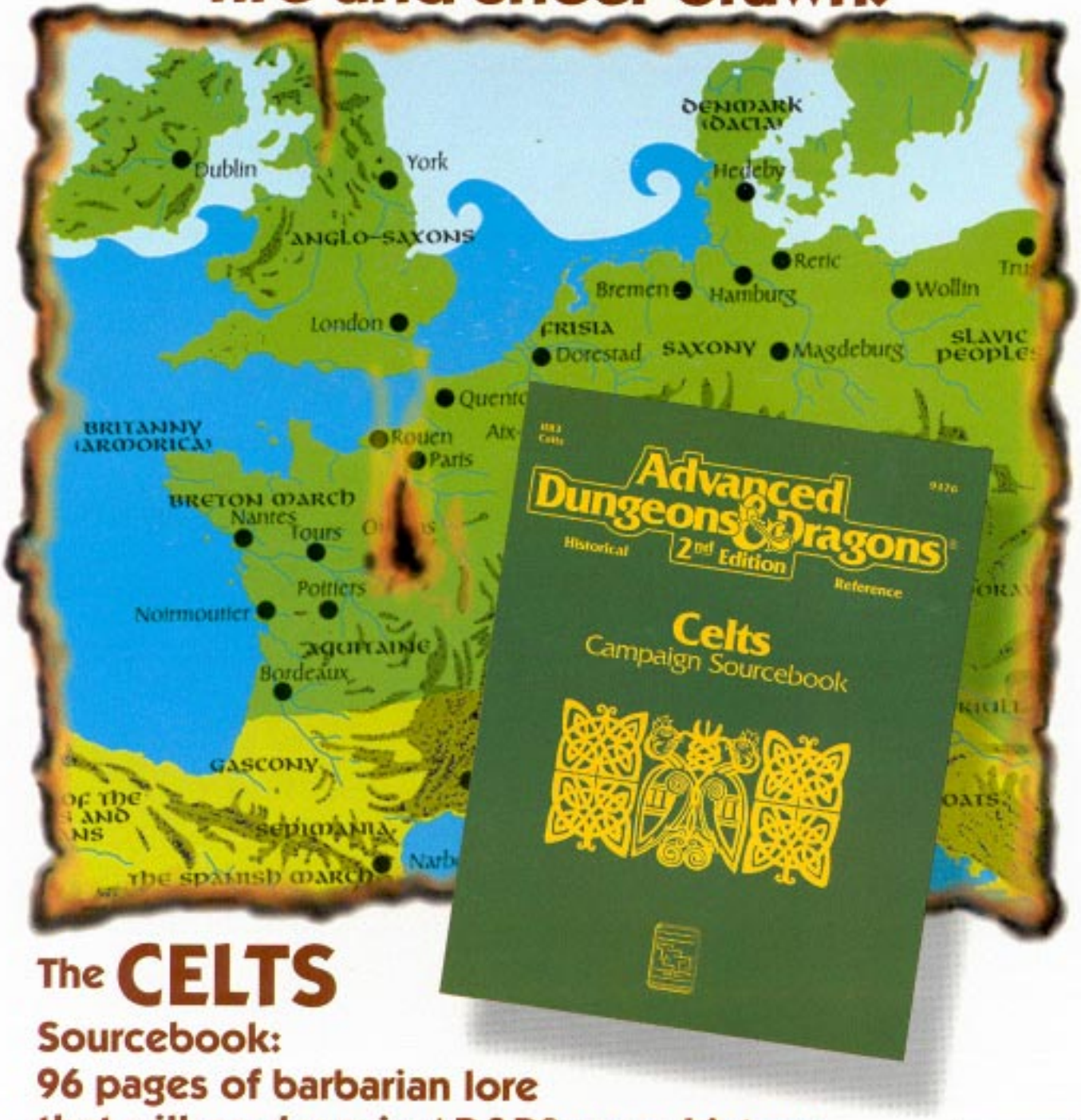


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ISBN 1-56076-445-7